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THE

ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY

Town Hall, Bombay.

Vickram Charitra;

OR,

ADVENTURES OF VICKRAMADETEA,

KING OF OUJEIN.

TRANSLATED FROM

THE PRAKRIT POEM OF HURRIDASS

INTO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE,

BY

RAGOBA MOROBA.

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PREFACE.

In presenting to the public an English version of the Adventures of King Vickramadetea, and the four Tales related by Veytal the demon king, comprised in this volume, the translator does not claim for himself anything more than what may be fairly his due. The work will, he trusts, be appreciated for its own merit. It is amusing, and well calculated to afford to juvenile readers, if indeed it may not prove as useful to those of riper years, wherewithal to wile away a few dull hours. It will also, he ventures to think, help to foster that taste for reading in the Natives of India which is now showing itself among them. To Europeans and others the work will, he hopes, be found acceptable, in so far as it contains a description of some of the forms and usages of Oriental life; and though the language in which it is clothed cannot, perhaps, be said to bear comparison with that of modern English authors, it will be found at least grammatically correct, the sheets having been revised by a friend who has had considerable experience in such matters, to whom the translator takes this opportunity of expressing his obligation.

The translator is aware that others have preceded him in the field in which he now courts the favor of the public; but that circumstance cannot, he thinks, deprive him of any

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merit which may be due for the labour he has ventured upon. Emulation is at all times praiseworthy, more particularly in cases of the present kind. The enlightenment of the age, aided in a great measure by the encouragement received, has placed the translator of the present work in a position to carry out his design more satisfactorily, if not more successfully, than is likely to have fallen to the lot of any of his predecessors. It is therefore with some little confidence, not untempered with diffidence, that he appears before the public. No originality of thought or sentiment is claimed: the Prakrit Poems of Hurridass have supplied the subject, which, as has been stated, is now for the first time clothed in the English garb for the benefit of the reader. The translator has taken some pains to expunge such passages as in his opinion bordered on immorality or indecency; and he will now let the work speak for itself, feeling confident that its shortcomings will be kindly dealt with by his friends and patrons, as well as by the public at large, who, keeping in view the fact that it can scarcely be expected of a Native so thoroughly to master the English idiom as one who has from his infancy lisped its accents, will deign to look upon his humble efforts with kind approbation, and, by a generous and liberal support, indemnify him for the trouble and expense he has necessarily incurred in this undertaking.

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ADVENTURES OF VICKRAMADETEA,

KING OF OUJEIN.

CHAPTER I.

King Vickramadetea—His military talents, intellectual accomplishments, and love of justice—The wisdom and integrity of his Prime Minister—Precautions taken to avert the effects of an adverse prediction made at Vickramadetea's birth—The hermit Soodew—The king obtains from him a practical knowledge of the science of transmigration—A sentinel, by following the king, also becomes possessed of the secret.

In the capital city of Oujein there once reigned a king named Vickramadetea, who was so liberal that none could be compared with him; he delighted in virtuous actions, and was exact in the administration of justice; he was a careful protector of his subjects; his riches were immense, his army very numerous and efficient, and in personal courage and valour he himself was unsurpassed. The people were virtuous and generally moral. The city was extensive and populous, and filled with well-designed and magnificent buildings. The people were happy and contented under the reign of this happy monarch, and they were pious and thankful to the Almighty for the blessings vouchsafed to them. They were at peace with their neighbours, and united in the bonds of love and amity. No thoughts of disloyalty or disaffection ever found place in their hearts. By the aid of a bountiful Providence the seasons were prolific, and the harvests plentiful; the trees were always green, and yielded innumerable fruits and flowers, which disseminated their

fragrance around the place. The rivers, lakes, and wells were full. The temples were built in the most costly manner, and no expense had been spared to add to their beauty and splendour. The king was greatly commended for his generosity and bravery, and all the rajahs subject to him paid him homage, and were regular in their tributes, and preserved to the very letter the terms of their treaties. The Veytal was also propitious to the monarch,—he always presented himself invisibly, when the king invoked his presence. King Vickramadetea was handsome in his person, excelled in learning, and accomplished in every respect. He was well acquainted with the occult and sacred sciences, and possessed a kind and affable disposition. He loved his minister as a brother, and placed every reliance upon him. No suitor or seeker after justice ever returned from the presence of this noble monarch without realising his wish, as the king delighted to relieve, and rejoiced in such acts of justice and benevolence.

It so happened, that in the midst of so much prosperity and happiness a cloud hung over the king. An able and experienced astrologer, a person of some note and reputation, had appeared among them, and predicted at the time of his birth, that the king would receive his death-blow at the hands of a person born of a virgin seven years old. This, as may well be imagined, caused the monarch considerable consternation; and when he ascended the throne he had a number of spies placed in and around the palace, and also in various parts of his dominions, with strict injunctions to watch narrowly all suspicious characters, and to bring such before him, so as by a timely warning to avert the impending danger, if possible. Being apprehensive lest he should fall a victim to the threatened fate, he had his emissaries even at the courts of the petty rajahs; and he once travelled from city to city, through forests and glens, enquiring of all he met whether a virgin seven years old had been delivered of a son; a journey which extended over a period of upwards of six months.

King Vickramadetea, it must be said, was an incarnation of Virbhudru, son of the god Shiva.* It was in this wise :—

In Kailas† lived Shiva, who, with his consort Girja, was once engaged in playing at chess. At the end of the game Girja was the winner, but Shiva jestingly denied it, and persisted, against all truth and reason, that the game was his. For some time they warmly disputed the point, till at length it was decided that they should play it over again in the presence of a third person, and abide by the issue; Virbhudru was accordingly selected as the umpire. They began the game, and fortune again favored Girja. Shiva nevertheless stoutly maintained that he was the winner also the second time, and so exasperated his consort that in a fit of rage she appealed to Virbhudru, calling upon him to declare the truth. Virbhudru seemed unwilling to give his opinion, lest by so doing he should irritate his father Shiva, and bring down his curse, whilst on the other hand he was afraid that by siding with his father he should enrage his mother, and provoke her to inflict some severe injury upon him. However, after communing with himself, he came to the conclusion that it would be safer to have the strongest party on his side, and so, with an utter disregard to truth, he faltered out to his mother that "Shiva had won the game." Scarcely had he expressed himself thus than she launched forth a curse upon him, exclaiming fiercely, "Go, wretch! and be transformed to a mortal, and henceforth live with mortals on the earth below!" Virbhudru on this immediately began to entreat her, and with tears in his eyes conjured his mother to recal her malediction, and to restore him to his position. After some hours spent in supplication he made an impression on Girja, when her anger was cooled down. Availing himself of this favorable turn in his case he redoubled his entreaties and tears, until she was

* One of the three principal Hindoo gods, to whom the power of destruction is attributed. He is represented in different characters.

† The paradise of Shiva.

persuaded to mitigate in some measure the punishment she had inflicted upon him. She said, " Thou shalt live alternately for a brief period with us and then reign in the kingdom and city of Oujein, provided thou becomest an incarnation of the Virbhudru in the shape of Vickramadetea."

When several years had prosperously rolled on, unmarked by any event worth notice, a hermit from Dwarka, named Soodew, presented himself at King Vickramadetea's court. His handsome mien and commanding carriage attracted the attention of all. He was besides, as if in contrast, of a willing disposition, possessed of much learning, and a great admirer of the fine arts. The king, on his appearance, granted him an immediate audience at court. He was so struck with his person, that he rose from the throne and prostrated himself before the hermit. The hermit lost no time in raising the king from the humble position into which he had thrown himself, and prayed him to resume his seat. The king insisted that the hermit should sit beside him on the throne, which he accordingly did. Thus seated, they conversed some time, during which the king extolled the hermit's wisdom, which appeared favorably in his conversation. After dismissing the court, the king led the hermit into an inner apartment of the palace, and placed a sumptuous repast before him, after which he perfumed the hermit's person with scents of the sweetest odour, and again entered into conversation with him on various topics, including science and the arts. The hermit, observing the vast and varied knowledge possessed by the king, asked, " Will your majesty, who is no doubt familiar with the several arts and sciences, inform me whether you possess any knowledge of the art of transmigration, or the power of changing ourselves or others into any shape or form, by the use of certain *montru** ?" The king replied that he was wholly unacquainted with it, but that he had a great and

* An incantation or mystical verse, a charm or spell.

anxious desire to have the mystery, in which it was (to him at least) shrouded, cleared up. The hermit's conversation greatly roused the curiosity of the king, and he entreated him to instruct him in it before he left the court. The hermit being thus solicited, and considering that it would be far better to impart his knowledge to a king than to any one else, consented to instruct him; and so with a smiling countenance said, "I will initiate you into this mystery tomorrow night, as there will be an auspicious hour then for the purpose. Your majesty must come unattended to the temple of Shiva, situated without the town walls, where I will be in waiting to receive you." The following morning the hermit repaired to the appointed place of meeting with the king, it being considered a sacred and secure spot, free from all intrusion. In the evening, when the sun had gradually sunk below the horizon, and night had spread its sable veil over the face of creation, the hermit might have been seen in the dusk, his figure extended to its full height, and listening eagerly for every sound, expecting the arrival of the king.

The king's impatience would not admit of his waiting until the time fixed for his starting. He left the palace a little earlier, and wended his lonely way in the direction of the temple. Arriving at the small gate of the town, he found a sentinel named Koobjuck stationed there. He directed him not to leave the spot until his return, as he had some very important business to transact out of town. The sentinel respectfully bowed an assent; but as the sovereign walked past him, he could not but reason in this wise, being an acute man: 'The king would certainly not venture to leave the city without the attendance of some officer or slave; and even were it so, I should be rendering a piece of valuable service by following him unknowingly, observing the direction he takes, and keeping myself at a respectful distance; for should any accident happen to him, I shall be ready at hand to render him assistance.' He therefore resolved to follow the king. He watched him

trudging along, and his curiosity being at its height, he made up to within a respectful distance of him, and kept him in view till he came near to the temple. Koobjuck here slightly hesitated, but at last, plucking up his courage, he entered the ground on which the temple was situated, close upon the heels of the king, and as the sovereign closed the door after him, Koobjuck leaned forward, and gave an attentive ear to the conversation that passed within between the king and hermit. At the close of the conference, when he found the king was about to retire, Koobjuck made all possible haste to regain his post, which he did without any one suspecting his temporary absence; and as the king returned back to the town, Koobjuck saluted him with his usual equanimity, as though nothing in the world had happened to disturb it. The following day his majesty, as was his usual practice, spent in regulating the affairs of his kingdom, and when night drew on he set forth again for the temple of Shiva, having previously issued an order that the vigilant Koobjuck should be placed, as on the previous day, to watch the suburbs of the town. The wily sentinel was punctual to his time, having anticipated the hour of the king's departure, and taken up his place. Thence he saw the king depart the second time to meet the hermit, and he also followed, and, as before, might have been seen listening with as much eagerness as on the former occasion, beside the temple door. Three successive visits were paid by the king to the hermit in this way, and at all three Koobjuck managed to be present in the manner described, until, at the end of the third visit, the hermit had made the king thoroughly acquainted with the mysteries of transmigration, and every portion of the instruction thus imparted to the sovereign had become equally familiar to the sentinel, so that, without even the shadow of a suspicion, he had been able clandestinely to acquire the knowledge.

The day following that on which the last of the visits was paid to him by the king, the hermit left the court,

having been loaded with magnificent presents, and set forward on his journey. King Vickramadetea accompanied him with his retinue for about a mile, and at parting expressed a deep sense of gratitude for the kindness the hermit had shown him in initiating him into the rare art of transmigration.

Meanwhile, the spies who had been placed in different parts of the country to obtain information as to the virgin of seven years old, who, it had been foretold, would give birth to a son who would end the king's days, returned without being able to render any satisfactory account of their labours. Nothing was known or heard of this extraordinary virgin; and, as a matter of course, in the absence of any knowledge of the mother it was impossible to ascertain whether the child fated to cause the death of the king was in existence or not. Thus was the king plunged into a wild maze of conjecture, without a clue to assist him in arriving at a satisfactory solution of the mystery.

CHAPTER II.

King Vickramadetea sets out upon a journey, attended by the sentinel who had acquired the knowledge of 'transmigration—The king, anxious to test the efficacy of the hermit's instructions, causes his own soul to reanimate the body of a dead serpent—The sentinel enters into the king's body, mounts his horse, and returns to Oujein, the capital of Vickramadetea's dominions—He personates the king, and assumes the reins of government, but departing from his master's policy, he becomes as much hated as Vickram had formerly been loved—The king discovers the duplicity of his servant, and fearing to continue in the shape of a serpent, assumes that of a parrot, and proceeds to the Fort of Sendoornuggry—He falls in with a troop of Bahooroopees—The strange metamorphoses which the king enables them to effect, and their extraordinary consequences.

KING VICKRAMADETEA'S mind was racked with anxiety as to his dreaded fate, as expressed at the end of the last chapter. In this state he sent for his minister and bosom friend, and gave orders to make preparations for a journey; he also consulted with him on the affairs of the state, and requested him to carry them on during his absence in the most impartial manner possible, and with strict attention to justice. He said that he was fully aware of the zeal the minister displayed in the welfare and well-being of his kingdom and people, and had therefore no hesitation in confiding to him the responsible task.

The preparations for the journey being completed, the tents pitched on the plain, and a propitious hour ascertained, the king set out with a small retinue towards the north. Among those who followed in his train was Koobjuck the sentinel, whom the king added to the number of his followers expressly for his tact and ingenuity. After travelling a few days they arrived at a stage near the capital city of Sendoornuggry, which was situated on the banks of a beautiful lake, surrounded with a variety of large and spreading trees, which formed a cool and refreshing shade.

This lake was full of the sweetest water, and as clear as crystal; they bathed in it, therefore, and after the usual ceremonies, partook of dinner. Shortly after the meal, the king went towards a flower-garden situated near the lake, for the avowed purpose of examining more closely its beauties; on approaching it he discovered a dead serpent lying amongst the bushes. The moment he saw it, he felt inclined to try the extent of knowledge which had been imparted to him by the hermit, fully believing that the Gooru* could not have practised any imposition on him. With this intention he returned to his tent, and prepared to give the subject, then uppermost in his mind, a fair trial. He ordered Koobjuck to wait for him while he slept a little, and positively forbade his disturbing him whilst in the arms of Morpheus, but to allow him to awake refreshed from his sleep. He then laid himself down in an alcove prepared for him, and was soon asleep. A certain charm had been previously applied, and it now began to take effect. As the monarch's sleep became heavy, the serpent began gradually to move; when it had regained its full strength, it rushed along furiously over the bank of the lake in the garden into the adjoining woods, attracted by the beauty of the landscape and scenery around the neighbourhood. These creatures are said to be susceptible of sylvan beauties; what amount of truth there is in this we do not presume to say, but give it merely as a popular assertion. The king's attendant, Koobjuck, perceiving the wonderful miracle achieved by his lord and master, namely, that of entering the body of a dead serpent, and conscious of the powers he himself possessed, (for which, it will be remembered, he was indebted to his eaves-dropping propensities, if we may so call them,) determined also to test their efficacy. He accordingly assumed the form of the king, who was lying near him asleep, and issued forth before the body of retainers. He ordered the tents to be struck, and

* A spiritual preceptor.

the whole equipage to return to Oujein ; and, mounting the king's horse, he quitted the place with them. In a few days he arrived at the capital, and it becoming known, the minister and all the courtiers assembled in the audience-hall to wait upon their king, and to congratulate him upon his safe return, which they did with every possible degree of esteem, love, and regard. The counterfeit Vickram then held a council with the members of the court, and told them that when he left the city it was not his intention to return so speedily, but that his follower Koobjuck having deserted, he was loath to proceed any further. "I thought," said he, "of setting out again on my tour, but there are reasons the urgency of which prevent my doing so at present." He then left the court and proceeded to the apartments of the queen. The queen was a person of great merit, and of much beauty. The accomplishments of her mind were also far above the common calibre; and, above all, she was possessed of much solid virtue. She saw the king approaching her, and prepared to receive him. After the usual interchange of civilities, into which she threw much of that winning softness of manner peculiar to her sex alone, and not suspecting the person before her to be other than her lawful king and husband, she entered into that free and confidential mode of talk pertaining to a wedded life, although surprised at seeing Vickramadetea enter her apartments at an hour of the day to him quite unusual. She said she was very anxious to see the trial of what the hermit had instructed him in, and pressed him much to set about it. She said, "Your majesty need not come into these rooms allotted to me for the next six months at least, unless you satisfy me in what I now solicit at your hands. I am desirous equally with you to derive the pleasure to be found from the knowledge of such a wonderful secret. I shall then only—that is, after you satisfy me on this head—willingly obey your majesty in all that it may be your pleasure to direct me." The base usurper thus replied to the queen: "Oh, my lovely angel! the desire of my soul! if it be your wish

to become mistress of the art I now possess, I solemnly declare I shall not thwart your inclination in this respect, nor in any other that you may ask me. I undertake to meet them all; but I recommend you to think well, and not insist on knowing that which, for reasons I cannot well explain, had best remain locked up in my breast. I do not wish to displease you, but I would fain not teach you the art of transmigration. I give you time to recall your thoughts, and ponder well upon what I have said; and if you still persist in knowing it, I will satisfy you." In his concluding remarks, the false king threw much warmth and some displeasure into his manner, unlike the true sovereign. In the latter, no trivial events, such as these, could have ruffled his temper in the slightest degree. This circumstance did not pass unnoticed by the wise minister of those realms, and he could not but ask himself, what could have worked such a change in his sovereign? 'There is certainly,' thought he, 'a wide difference between his former carriage and bearing and these he now displays;' and as he had some slight belief in the power of transmigration, he naturally enough concluded that he had only the body of the king before him, with some other soul inhabiting it for the present, a matter he was determined to ascertain. Meanwhile the new king commenced a reign, marked by the grossest injustice, and the violation of all the rights and privileges which previously tended so much to the well-being and prosperity of each and all in the country, and to the stability of the government itself. This occasioned much bitterness and lamentation, where there formerly reigned peace and happiness. Where it was once customary to bestow commendations on the king, and to call down blessings on him, every mouth was now filled with the direst imprecations and curses. The minister, though much averse to be made a tool in the hands of such a despot, was, nevertheless, forced to submit to that which, under the circumstances, there could be no means for effectually putting a stop to. All he could do, by his advice and suggestions,

were done most zealously ; but they went but a little way with the king, who, to his other bad qualities, added that of conceit. We will leave him for the present, and treat of the serpent which had been brought into life, and which we left in the woods.

The serpent, then, after coiling and sporting in the woods for a time, returned, with the same speed that marked his onward course, to the spot whence he first started, and found there the body of Koobjuck alone in the place where he had left him in life. At first sight, the serpent (who it will no doubt be recollected was the rightful king *in disguise*) was rooted to the spot, with rage and astonishment contending within him. He could scarcely believe his own eyes. After a long gaze at the body of Koobjuck, he exclaimed, " How now ! I am scarcely out of my natural frame and within the woods, but thou committest such a daring outrage upon my person !" While contemplating his position, he became dejected and melancholy ; in a word, he was quite beside himself. He again burst forth in terms of mingled rage and disappointment, and casting his eyes on the body lying before him, said, " What a dreadful and unparalleled instance of duplicity and mischief hast thou shown towards me, in assuming my form and going away, and leaving me the choice of yours, or retaining that of the serpent ! If I enter thy body, so cursed that if I look on it I incur a great sin ; and if I converse with such as thee, then my crime is equivalent to a murder ; if I eat with such it is even worse, for the murder will then be as that of a brahmin ; and equally unfortunate will it prove, should I receive even a drink of water from such a person's hands. The company of the wicked is ever pregnant with evils, and places a man in danger. It is said in the law, that a man should not approach to within five paces of a bullock, ten of a horse, and a thousand of an elephant ; but that one should abandon the city altogether, when the residence in it of a wicked man is fully ascertained. Oh ! what misfortune hast thou not brought on me !—thou hast injured

me both in soul and body by preventing a re-union of them. Certainly—oh, unhappy destiny !—what has been fated must come to pass, and I have therefore only to bear it with patience. Oh, perfidious wretch ! Oh, most ungrateful villain ! I will never appear in thy detestable form, so full of deceit, ingratitude, and wickedness !"

In this state of grief, bordering on despair, a sudden thought crossed his mind, which gave him some relief. He knew that he had very kind and faithful friends in Soodew and Veytal.* On this he endeavoured to restrain his sorrow, and become more calm and collected. Believing he would be preserved from all danger, he started for the city of Sendoornuggry. While journeying along, he was led into considering the great danger he ran by continuing in the form of a serpent, a reptile held in deserved detestation by mankind, in consequence of the bitter enmity between them, and the venomous nature of the former. It chanced, however, that he found, shortly after his musings, under a Vur† tree, a dead parrot, and knowing it to be a bird held in high repute for its beauty, colour, and other estimable qualities, he lost no time in taking its form, by which he not only lessened his danger, but acquired speed in his movements,—a thing by no means to be despised, situated as he was. Having transformed himself into the parrot, he ascended high into the air, and after having satisfied himself in all that delighted him in his new form,—perching on a tree here, picking a fruit there, and so on,—he arrived just without the walls of Sendoornuggry in much less time than he could have done without the wings of a parrot, and its light and active frame. The parrot (that is, the king) alighted on a tree, under the inviting shelter of which a troop of Bahooroopees,‡ who were in very distressed circumstances, had shortly before taken up their residence.

* The king of demons.

† The Indian fig-tree.

‡ A wandering tribe, who go about as dancers, actors, maskers, &c.

They were bitterly complaining of their hard lot, and were loud in their bewailings; they were heard to raise their voice and exclaim, "Almighty Creator of all things! consider the vast and boundless difference between the rich and the poor: while we are every day, every hour, and every moment of our lives, exposed to the most harassing fatigues, painful privations, and the direst of calamities, which may be summed in the brief monosyllable 'want,'—want of the necessaries of life, of food and clothing for ourselves and families—want of comfort—want of everything, in short, that can make life desirable, or even tolerable,—the rich are permitted to roll in wealth, with a superfluity of all that is denied to us, and of the things which are essential to life. What have these done to secure for themselves so enviable a lot, and what have we been found wanting in to deserve so much misery? We have parted with the little we possessed, consisting of the ornaments used in our profession, and which were our all, in order to procure the bare means of subsistence for to-day; tomorrow we may meet with death staring us in the face!"

Having disburdened themselves of their griefs in this wise, they laid themselves down. The parrot, who had heard every word they uttered from his lofty perch, was much affected at the affliction of the poor and wretched Bahooroopees, as expressed in their words. He deigned to address them as follows:—"Strangers," said he, "whence come ye, and whither are you bound? Pray inform me, what are your respective callings or professions, the tribes to which each belong, your countries and your religions, and your reasons for thus bewailing?" These sympathising words, delivered also in a tone of voice peculiar for its sweetness, caused the Bahooroopees to start up and listen attentively whence the voice proceeded, but they could not discover it; at last, after much trouble and some little delay, they saw the parrot perched up aloft on one of the furthermost branches of the tree under which they were all assembled. The chief of the company was delighted that

such enquiries were made regarding them, and at the same time was astonished that a parrot should display so much sense and sympathy. There was something very extraordinary about that, he thought. In the belief that a parrot, which could show such wonderful wisdom, might also devise some means for the amelioration of their condition, he besought it to take pity on their miserable state, and asked it to come down from the tree, assuring it that no harm should be done it. Seeing the kind and grateful manner in which the invitation was tendered, the parrot flew down from the tree, and joined the wanderers below. These people, one after the other, drew near it by turns, and prostrated themselves before it. The chief, at the end of this obeisance, said, "Oh sage parrot! do us the favor to listen attentively to our unfortunate tale. We are of the tribe of Bahooroopee; we arrived at this city about a month ago, with the view of following our calling, which is that of strolling players, and by such means to earn an honest livelihood; but I regret exceedingly to state that the king will not permit our doing so, nor will he condescend to witness our performance, which has proved a sore disappointment to us, and we are now at a great loss what plan to adopt to obtain a subsistence. We have been compelled by sheer necessity to part with all we possessed when we first set foot in this city, even with the ornaments which formed a part of our appendage, for the purpose of obtaining food, so that we have nothing left now, and are therefore quite destitute." The parrot, after a patient hearing of this sad case, asked the chief if any of them were masters of any particular art, by exhibiting which the king might be induced to sympathise with them. He replied that if the king would only tolerate their presence, and allow them a fair opportunity of winning his patronage, he would undertake to secure it ere long. The parrot then desired to be informed of the arts with which the Bahooroopees were familiar, and they did so. But, much to their surprise, none of them seemed to please the parrot, still less did they

meet with his approval. He promised to instruct the Bahooroopees in such arts as would be of use to them in their mode of life, and said that by their means they would be enabled to secure a good living. The chief of the Bahooroopees became quite overjoyed at this, and returned thanks to Heaven and to their winged benefactor for the promised acquisition, with much sincerity and truth. It was now late, the sun had performed his course, and the earth was being gradually enshrouded in the dusky folds of night. It was supper-time, and they partook of their evening meal in company with the parrot, after which the chief of the Bahooroopees entreated the parrot to reveal to them all he had promised; but the parrot said that the night was far advanced, and that, besides, the place they then were in was not suitable for the purpose, he therefore asked them to accompany him to a fitter locality. The chief, accordingly, prepared to set out with the parrot, selecting two nimble and intelligent youths from his gang to be their companions. Having arrived at a certain spot, favorable for imparting the art, the parrot taught them the method of transmigration. He also taught them other things, to be effected by the use of charms; and when they had sufficiently mastered the whole, they renewed their thanks to the parrot for the trouble he had been at, and for the invaluable boon he had bestowed on them and their class. They then returned to the place where they had left the remainder of their gang. Early next day, after going through the ceremonies peculiar to them, they sat down to their breakfast with joyous hearts, and sent one of their number to the court to see if the king appeared in public that morning. The messenger returned with the news that the king was holding his court, surrounded by his nobles and courtiers. The chief of the Bahooroopees instantly changed himself, by means of the charm given to him by the parrot the previous day, into a brave and monstrous warrior, with a complete suit of armour, sword in hand, with a shield, and bow slung across him, and a quiver full of arrows. One of the youths became,

by a like process, a young lady of incomparable beauty, splendidly attired, with costly jewels vieing in brilliancy with the sun and her own charms. Another assumed the form of a horse of exact symmetry and rare perfections, richly caparisoned, with a saddle-cloth and bits of pure gold, fit for the use of the highest personage in the land. The chief mounted the horse, and, with the lady in his arms, rode through the air as if by magic, until they arrived opposite to the king's court, where they descended. The king, and all assembled with him, looked on in astonishment at the wonderful feat performed, and the beauty and richness of the persons. The warrior dismounted, and stepping forward to the king, addressed him as follows :—"Oh king! I am come on a most particular mission." "Speak!" said the king. The warrior continued,—"There is in heaven a grand war between the divine Angels and the Daityas* ; the army of the Angels is already encamped in the field, and have sent for me to assist them in the struggle; my beautiful wife (pointing to her) had determined to accompany me to the battle-field, although I seriously entreated her not to do it, but her obstinacy has been so great, that I was compelled to bring her with me. I am, however, resolved, upon better thoughts, not to expose her to the dangers of war, so I bring her to your court for safety during my absence, knowing that you will be kind and treat her well, and set before her examples of religion, and of strict and correct behaviour. Please, then, have the same consideration for her as you would for a mother or sister, and act by her accordingly. I must tell you that my name is Vejydhwaj,† and I am a resident of the city of Auyodhea. I am now about to ascend to heaven, and I beg you will be pleased to take charge of my wife till I return, I hope with victory in my train; but should fate have reserved for me death on the field, then I conjure you to immolate her, in accordance with the usual practice on such occasions." "Ah! Vejydhwaj,"

* Demons or Asœrus.

† Flag of victory.

said the king, "may God deliver you from the hands of the enemy! May He, in his infinite mercy, keep a constant watch over you!" "I beg to acquaint your majesty that my valour is so great, that the Daityas are not equal to contend with me. I am sure of winning the battle, and putting them to flight." Now the king thought that this reply of Vejydhwaj merited reproof, as he deemed it highly improper in any one, however great, to speak thus confidently before him. But being quite taken up with the feigned warrior, he said, "Vejydhwaj, I will take as much care of your wife as I would of my own child; depend on me, and go with confidence on your mission. May success attend you!" Vejydhwaj thanked the king for his kind welcome and still kinder promise, and set off on his journey, whipping his horse as he ascended with great rapidity to the heavens, amidst the wondering gaze of the king and the crowd there assembled. He was soon lost to sight. The king and all about him concluded that he had reached heaven, and they were confirmed in their belief when some little time after they heard the sounds of drums and martial instruments high above their heads. The noise and confusion which followed these sounds also told them that the combatants were engaged in furious warfare, and, as if in confirmation of this, they saw blood-stained arrows fall to the earth. They raised their eyes towards the firmament, and, while gazing intently upwards, saw the left hand of a man fall, severed from the body, then the right one, and soon after the body itself, dreadfully wounded and mangled. At first they were in doubt as to the identity of the body, and thought it to be that of some obscure soldier, but they were soon able to satisfy themselves on that point, for the head came whizzing through the air, and fell beside the body. The face bore a parting smile, and it was that of the warrior who, a short time before, appeared before them full of life and hope, and who had discoursed with them in all confidence, when leaving his wife under the protection of the king.

CHAPTER III.

The same subject continued—Tale of the Alligator and the Traveller—The chief of the Bahooroopees disposes of the parrot to a wealthy merchant—A dancing-girl endeavours to extort money from the merchant by a false accusation, which is frustrated by the ingenuity of the parrot—The dancing-girl prevails upon the merchant to make her a present of the parrot—In revenge, she orders her slave to put him to death; but Veytal, the king of the demons, saves his life, and enables him to escape—The parrot flies to the temple of the Goddess Kallika.

THE painful intelligence of the death of Vejydhwaj having reached his wife, whilst she was engaged in the queen's apartment, she instantly came to where the mutilated corpse of her husband was laid, and bewailed her misfortune in no measured terms, in the following frantic exclamations:—"Oh! husband of my heart! my best beloved!—you were ever considered as a brave and unconquerable warrior; your equal was not known; you were always victorious in all your encounters; by your courage and determination you have on more than forty-two different occasions ascended to heaven, to take part in the most dreadful of strifes, and yet were never vanquished. Oh! my heart's best treasure!—you have been my only support, and now that you are no more, where can I look for the means of subsistence? I am swallowed up in an ocean of grief, which is all the deeper in that I was not with you to tend you in your last dying moments. It was in vain that you placed me in charge of a king." The people, greatly affected by the excessive grief manifested by the warrior's wife, mingled their tears and sympathies with hers, which presented a spectacle truly melancholy.

While she was thus lamenting the cruel fate which deprived her of her husband, the king approached her, and, with much tenderness in his manner, said,—"I pray you,

fair lady, do not give yourself up thus to grief. This is a misfortune, I am aware, of no ordinary kind, and which you must keenly feel, but recollect that it was beyond all human control: it is appointed for all men to die once. Although I cannot but acknowledge that to be altogether insensible to the loss, the irreparable loss, you have this day sustained would be impossible, nay inexcusable in you, yet permit me to observe there is a wide difference between such callousness and moderation in grief, to which I would fain bring you. To be sensible of God's afflicting hand under such a dispensation, and to receive it as the punishment which we have deserved, is the bounden duty of all, but it would be a species of rebellion against the inscrutable decrees of Heaven to be inconsolable. That you may not, therefore, add sin to your affliction, allow me to withdraw you from this scene. I have a daughter, who, at my desire, will be ever ready to render you all the assistance in her power, and who will treat you in all respects as a sister. I assure you I will afford you every protection, and place you entirely on an equal footing with her, so long as you may think fit to reside in my court." The widow replied, —"I am extremely thankful to your majesty for your kind and generous offer, and for the sympathy expressed in your speech, but I request that you will be pleased to order immediately the necessary preparations for burning me, as I look not to survive this catastrophe, nor do I wish it. I am resolved to sacrifice myself on the pile that will be raised to perform my husband's last rites, and I entreat you will not, either by argument or other means, attempt to dissuade me from my fixed and unalterable design." The king endeavoured to impress upon her the gross absurdity of such conduct, and to show how much it was at variance with the mild precepts of religion and the character of the Divine Being. "Let me advise you," said he, "to reflect for one moment on the revolting nature of the act you are about to commit; it is repugnant to every feeling of humanity and good sense. Return home, and give it your due

and unbiassed consideration: let the virtue of your husband live and be cherished in your bosom!" Notwithstanding all these powerful arguments, she remained firm to her purpose, and the king at last reluctantly consented that she should be furnished with all that was necessary for the end she contemplated, and with everything requisite for the sad solemnity. He directed that the corpse of the deceased warrior should be laid on the pile prepared to receive it; and every other preparation being made, one of the king's own palanquins was brought out to convey the devoted victim to the place where the tragic act was to be consummated. The widow having entered the palanquin, accompanied by the king and his whole court and retainers, proceeded to the place. Here she alighted and bathed; then, having adorned her person as if she was going to be wedded, instead of being immolated on the funeral pile of her husband, she embraced the corpse before it was consigned to the flames, with all apparent demonstrations of affection, and thus addressed the surrounding multitude:—"God made me what I am, and gave me a husband whom I dearly loved, and on whom I bestowed my undivided affection. Oh husband! though the trial will be great, I will accompany thee, that even in the next world thou mayest still be mine, and that through eternity we may again be united in the bonds of conjugal felicity!" With these words she placed the remains on the burning pile, and looking around said,—"Pardon me, oh king, and all ye people, this my voluntary act!" She then, without the slightest show of fear, or any of those signs which mark the inward workings of terror or hesitation, but, on the contrary, with a placid look and her countenance radiant with smiles, made one bold leap into the burning heap, and was soon enveloped in flames. No groan or sigh met the ear—all was still as death, save the crackling noise of the fire-wood as it burned.

After witnessing this revolting spectacle, the king and his nobles returned to town, wrapped in deep and impene-

trable thought and moody silence. Even the mass of the people seemed to have been infected with the melancholy the event here related had cast over the spectators; and all was one continued chorus of pity and commiseration for the unfortunate widow who had thus devoted herself to a fate so painful.

Not long after the crowd had dispersed from the scene where the widow had immolated herself despite the entreaties of her friends, she contrived, by the influence of her art or by some occult means, to extricate herself from her apparently awful position, and to bring to life her deceased husband. She then informed him of all that had transpired during his absence. The warrior, now become whole, and complete in his limbs, instantly set out for the court, where he arrived, to the amazement and wonder of all, whilst they were yet engaged in the discussion of the event from witnessing which they had but just returned. Without much ado, and dispensing with all the courtly forms prevailing in those days, the warrior approached the sovereign, and, after the usual interchange of civilities, addressed him to the following effect:—"Oh king! I am extremely happy in being able to inform you that in the battle fought recently in heaven, and in which I assisted the divine Angels with all my judgment and valour, the success has been all on our side. I have vanquished the Asœrus. The war was fierce and bloody. The bravest troops of the enemy were either slain or wounded, and the remainder panic-struck with the valour I displayed, and the repeated onslaughts I made on them. Look!" added the warrior, "these are the rewards of my labour (pointing to his rich attire, and the jewels with which his brow was encircled). I now entreat your majesty will grant me permission to remove my wife from under your protection; the city of Auyodhea, where I live, being at a great distance, I must return home immediately." At these words, the sudden resuscitation of a man whom they had considered dead, and his being unable to produce his wife, the king felt

great consternation, nor were his minister and courtiers less astounded. He beckoned his minister, who approached him with unsteady steps, and with fear depicted in every lineament of his countenance. "What an unexpected danger is this!" exclaimed the king, as soon as he could give vent to the feelings of his heart; "whence comes this man? How did he become re-animated, and what expedient can we adopt?" The minister exhorted his master, as well as he could, to have patience for a while, and promised to devise some means of satisfying the warrior. He said he would speak to the man in private. With this he went towards him, and sought an interview. The minister entered fully into the particulars and circumstances of the events which, he said, they were even then deploring, and called the whole population to prove the accuracy of his statements. The warrior, however, instead of exhibiting symptoms of grief at the untimely fate of his wife, became furious and uncontrollable. He threatened at once to appeal to arms. "What!" said he, "am I right in hearing you? Was it ever before known that a woman immolated herself with her husband yet living? Oh no! I cannot believe what you say. I once took you to be a just, prudent, and virtuous man, but you appear no longer so. My wife has been basely dealt with, if not forcibly kept from me; and I will wage war to the death till I know more about it, and there remains nothing else for me to do. You know what I am capable of, and I warn you to beware of trifling with such an one as you know me to be!" The king heard the threats made by the warrior, and became pale with fear; and being no longer able to control himself, came up to the warrior and besought him to have pity on him. "Moderate your anger, sir," said he; "what my minister says is the truth. But if you are not satisfied with it, and as it is entirely out of my power to produce your wife, who is now reduced to ashes, you may, if you like, accept of my queen, in exchange for her. I will do anything else that I can for you, if you will only mention it. I desire to

preserve your friendship, so that you may, if I can achieve it, depart hence in peace." The warrior listened to the king with much attention, and then fell into a violent fit of laughter, which surprised all present. As soon as he had regained his gravity he said, "I pray your majesty to consider whether it would be sensible in me to accept of the queen in lieu of my wife. The queen is to me a mother—neither more nor less. I believe your majesty knows, or at least ought to know, that we are taught by divine law to consider our queen, our tutors' wives, our wives' mothers, and the mother who gave us birth, as standing one and all in the same relation to us—that of mother. How, then, can I take the queen to supply the place of my wife?" At this remonstrance the king became pale with shame, and suffered much inwardly for having committed so grave and serious an error. The warrior, observing the sudden effect produced by him, burst into another fit of laughter, and tried to infuse courage into the monarch. He said, "My worthy and renowned sovereign, I beg your majesty will not be surprised if I disclose to you now the deceit I practised on your majesty, and the causes which led me into it. But before I proceed to relate them, your majesty must grant me your full pardon." "I will on no account refuse you my pardon," replied the king, "whether justly or not." "Your majesty must know, then," said the individual who had so long palmed himself off as a brave warrior of high rank and renown, and who had made the king and his whole court tremble before him, "Your majesty must know, then, that I am a Bahooroopee, and reached this city about a month ago. I used all the wit I was possessed of, to no purpose, in endeavouring to secure your majesty's patronage to the performance of the peculiar plays that are involved in the calling I pursue. Being thus deprived of every means by which to turn an honest pice, and all the avenues being shut against me, I was induced to have recourse to the deception I have practised on your majesty." The king could not possibly

bring himself to believe this statement. He said, "Since you are the same person, go and call your wife here instantly, that we may satisfy ourselves, by ocular proof, of the truth of your story." Whereupon he shouted to his wife, "My dear wife! I pray you do not delay joining me here in the presence of our sovereign and his noble councillors and retainers, as they are very anxious to see you." No sooner did she hear the voice of her husband than she made her appearance, her beauty, as if purified by fire, appearing still more attractive, which, with the graceful and sylph-like form she possessed, threw the whole court into an ecstacy of delight, so much so that each and all fell passionately in love with her. The king was mightily pleased with this delightful vision. He immediately ordered his treasurer to pay to the owner of so much beauty and attraction as much money as he required, and other presents, such as rich suits of apparel, ornaments, jewels, &c. In addition to all this, he was allowed to perform his plays within the city without let or hindrance, and for as long a time as he might think proper. The ministers, nobles, and all the wealthier portion of the community, awarded him dresses of honor according to their respective rank and ability; many of the poorer citizens also came forward and contributed their share towards increasing the riches that were showered upon this fortunate Bahooroopee, who was compelled to call in assistance to remove the wealth he had acquired in so short a period from the palace. He soon after retired to his dwelling, and the king's council dissolved.

The Bahooroopee was transported with joy at the sudden and unexpected turn his fortune had taken. From being one of the most destitute of the human kind, he was now possessed of wealth and affluence, and could command the friendship even of the great and powerful. On his return to the humble dwelling of former days, he went to the parrot, who had been instrumental in enriching him far beyond his most unbounded wishes, and renewed his thanks and professions of perpetual friendship, after throwing him-

self at the feet of the discreet bird. The Bahooroopee commended the wisdom of the parrot in all sincerity and gratitude. He said that it was to the tiny creature that himself and his companions were indebted for the wealth of which they were now possessed; and he entered into a minute detail of all that had happened since he parted from his feathery benefactor, and how he had become master of so great riches.* In short, the Bahooroopee acknowledged to the bird how great and immeasurable was the debt of gratitude under which himself and his companions were laid to him, by the instruction which his compassion and liberality had prompted him to impart, and swore undying friendship to him.

On the following day the little parrot desired the Bahooroopee to take him to the market-place, and to sell him to any one who might be desirous to become a purchaser. The price to be demanded was his own weight in gold. The Bahooroopee, at this sudden resolution of the bird, was excessively grieved, and wished to be made acquainted with the cause of the whim which the parrot had taken into his head. He said that as favors and riches had been bestowed upon him through its aid, he had calculated upon being allowed the opportunity of repaying it in some degree, by a life of devotion to it, and by supporting it himself. The Bahooroopee entreated the parrot not to deprive him of that consolation. "I have plenty of money now," said he, "and it would argue ingratitude of the basest kind were I to agree to what you now propose doing. It would be like the story related of an alligator, which a traveller relieved

* As the Sudama brahmin was reduced to the extreme verge of poverty, and the Almighty Being, pleased with his pious life and humble deportment, vouchsafed to present him with a golden city. Bibishun, brother of Ravun, king of Lunka, having in all humility surrendered himself to Rama (who assassinated all Rakshasa), was throned by him in Lunka for all eternity. So the child Dhuroo was succoured by God, and placed in a state of bliss and great splendour in the unchangeable firmament. There are many instances similar to this.

from the most severe and painful agonies. I will recount it to you if you will favor me with your attention." He then took his seat near the bird, and commenced the following

TALE OF THE ALLIGATOR AND THE TRAVELLER.

In one of the hottest periods of the year, while the sun was at its height, an alligator, extremely exhausted by the intensity of the heat, was unable to go back to the place whence he had been tempted to rove to a distance on the banks of the river Gunga. He was there observed lying, as if in pain, by a traveller who chanced to be passing that way at the time. Observing the man, the alligator addressed him in these words:—"Oh, my honest friend, you will render me an incalculable service, and one for which you will place me under a deep debt of gratitude, if you will plunge me into the river which you see before you. You will thus save my life, and I shall feel most thankful to you. The Almighty will reward you for your labour." The traveller replied, that should he do him this good office, he doubted whether the alligator, when he once found the man in the water with him, would allow him to escape with life. "Do not, my friend, entertain the least fear on that point," said the alligator, "for I swear to you you shall come to no harm." The traveller, placing implicit reliance on the alligator's word, and being at the same time moved with compassion at his sufferings, after wrapping him up in a cloth, raised him from the recumbent posture in which he found him, and took him up on his head. In this way he entered the water, and when he had proceeded a short distance, the alligator inquired the depth of that part of the river where they then were, and on the reply being given that the water reached only up to the traveller's waist, the alligator said, "Convey me a little further." The deluded man went on as he was desired, without attaching any importance to the interrogatory that had been addressed to him, and which might have given rise to suspicions of no

pleasing nature in those of greater experience in the ways of the world. However, as we said, the unsuspecting traveller went on till the water came up to his neck; he then set about releasing the alligator from the folds of the cloth he had wrapped round him. No sooner did the alligator find himself at full liberty and in his own element, than the ungrateful creature, turning briskly round to the man, said, "Now I have you, and shall devour you!" "Ah!" exclaimed the traveller, "is it thus you repay the essential service I have rendered you? Would you, in return for the life I have saved, take that of your benefactor?" "I do not deny what you say," replied the alligator, "but know you not that I am an enemy to man? You are an egregious fool for believing in my promises, which I was justified in making under the circumstances, but which are no longer binding when the necessity for them has passed away." "But wherein have I offended you?" doled forth the miserable and now trembling traveller; "is this the reward for the services I have rendered you? Will no consideration induce you to act justly by me? Remember the injustice you are about to commit—to return evil for good. Remember your oaths. Spare me, I entreat you, and God will prosper you." "Your whining discourse can have no weight with me," rejoined the ruthless alligator; "prepare yourself to die!" The traveller, with the marks of terror in every line of his face, and his hair erect, falteringly besought the alligator in the most pathetic terms to allow him to depart in safety, but all to no purpose. He bitterly repented having turned from his path to succour the ungrateful reptile. At this moment, one of those creatures distinguished by their peculiar cunning and sagacity, a fox, approached the river to quench his thirst. Hearing the lamentations of the traveller, he inquired the cause of so much grief. The alligator was the first to reply, and gave the fox his version of the case; but not satisfied with this he asked what the traveller had to say, who told his tale, and felt greatly relieved by the appearance of a third party

in the field, if on no other account than the establishment of a temporary truce. The fox, after pondering for awhile, and seeing the ingratitude of the alligator, was resolved to inflict on him some sort of punishment. He said, " How is it possible for me to give my judgment on this dispute, unless you point out the spot where your first meeting took place, and the position of the alligator ?" The alligator undertook to show the place, on condition that the fox would promise to make the traveller bring him again into the water immediately he had done so, as he had business of importance to attend to at his own habitation. This was agreed to. The traveller accordingly took up the alligator a second time, and brought him to land, where, instead of entering into a discussion of the case, he, at a sign from the fox, left the alligator to shift for himself, and he and the fox went on their way.

Here the Bahooroopee, addressing himself to the parrot, said, " You are now bidding me to act towards you in the same manner as the monstrous alligator treated the traveller." The parrot desired him not to think so, and said that the Bahooroopee would, on the contrary, show his gratitude and receive the parrot's thanks, by yielding to his wishes and selling him. The Bahooroopee could not now resist this direct appeal to his heart. He felt he should be displeasing the parrot were he any longer to hold out against his wishes. Accordingly, in obedience to his patron's instruction and importunity, though at the same time he was greatly averse to part with him, with a heavy heart he took up the bird, and proceeded with him to the town of Sendoornuggry, in search of a purchaser. He walked with the bird in his hand, exposed to view, from one street to another, and from shop to shop, for a long time. At last a wealthy merchant named Dushwant, having observed the man and the handsome parrot, beckoned to him, and entered into a negotiation for the purchase. On asking the price, the Bahooroopee told him that he would part with the

bird for nothing less than its weight in gold, and under a promise from its future master that he would obey implicitly its directions. The merchant laughed at the latter part of the Bahooroopee's terms; he, however, agreed to the price and paid the gold. After the bird had changed hands, it only remained for the Bahooroopee to take his leave; and the parting was one that both remembered during the whole remainder of their lives. It was an affecting sight to witness the manly and unfeigned grief of the Bahooroopee, who was indebted to so great an extent to the feathery creature before him for all he possessed, and he wept loud and long. At last, with the mutual exchange of the most endearing expressions of feeling and sympathy, and with hopes of again meeting, they parted from each other.

Dushwant, the merchant who now owned the parrot, was a very wealthy and pious individual, endowed with many good qualities, but withal mean in the extreme. He put the parrot into a good cage, however, and sent him home by his servant to his wife. On reaching home, the merchant's wife asked the servant where he had got the bird from, and he replied, that his master had just purchased him for her diversion. "This parrot, you must understand, good mistress, is remarkably clever, possessing as much sense and knowledge as any human being." The mistress was quite elated at the idea of possessing a bird of such extraordinary parts, and of so much beauty in appearance. She directed one of the slaves to place the cage on a *chowrung** of a large size, where the cat could not reach it.

The merchant's wife was a lady who could boast of a fair share of beauty, gentle in her manners, and very prudent. She was dressed in the simplest and most ordinary attire, which did not become her, and was quite unsuited to the gracefulness of her demeanour and the unpretending but yet radiant cast of her beauty. She was not treated by her husband as she deserved to be, but yet she was a most virtuous woman and a faithful wife. She was allowed but

* A square stool.

little or no control in domestic concerns—not from any want of the necessary qualifications, but from the evil nature of her husband, notwithstanding his piety. These little explanations are necessary, to prepare the reader for what follows. After the parrot had been placed on the *chowrung* allotted to him, the mistress ordered one of her slaves to give some grain to the miller, to be ground for the use of the bird. Observing the grain to be of the most ordinary kind, and consisting of several different descriptions, the parrot asked his mistress if that was what they used daily for their own food. "Yes," said she, "though we have all we can wish for in this house, and that too in abundance, the parsimonious nature of my husband deprives me of all control in the arrangement of his domestic concerns, and to act otherwise than I do at present would bring down upon me his ire." The parrot judged from this that she was leading an unhappy life, so he said to his mistress, "Take my advice, and go you now and order the preparation of everything good to-day to eat, after which put on your best and richest clothes, and adorn yourself with all the jewels you possess. Fear not; I will answer for you. Should your husband display any symptoms of anger I will appease him, and bring about such a change in his habits and life that he will never behave towards you as he has hitherto done." This induced the mistress to do as she was bid. Having acted up to the instructions of the parrot so far, she came to him, and asked for further counsel. "Let your husband," said he, "be sent for to take his meal a little earlier than is his wont." A servant was sent forth instantly. The merchant was somewhat surprised to receive a call to his meal so unusually early; he, however, returned home. He was still more surprised and even enraged at the profuseness and richness of the repast that was prepared for him, and at the gaudiness with which his wife was decked out. After performing his ablutions, the merchant sat down to his meal, casting no friendly glance from time to time at his wife, and at the ornaments on her person; these

glances betrayed a concentrated rage, mingled with grasping niggardliness; so furious was he that he could not give utterance to a single word. Thus, while he was occupied between eating his meal and stifling his passion, the thought occurred to him, that as the parrot he had recently purchased was a very knowing and extraordinary bird, his wife might probably have been put up to all he then witnessed by him; he determined, however, to see how long she would carry it on. She kept it up, at the instigation of the parrot, for a whole month. The husband seeing the determination with which his wife followed up her recent whim, thought it advisable not to come to an open rupture, but in his heart he secretly blamed her, though he had not the courage to tell her so. One day the parrot, finding Dushwant in a remarkably good humour, addressed him in a very soothing and winning tone, and asked him whether, since his arrival among them, he had become prosperous in his trade, or met with any reverses. The parrot desired the merchant to examine his books and accounts, and to satisfy him on this head, and the merchant ordered his head *moonim** to ascertain this. The *moonim* reported that the whole concern had increased four-fold since the bird's arrival. The merchant believed his good luck to have been brought by the parrot, for during the long period that he had been conducting his business, no such results, or anything like them, had ever taken place till now. It is not in the power of language to describe the sensation of grateful emotion that rose in the merchant's bosom, as this conviction flashed through his mind. He thanked the bird in terms as commendable as they were sincere and deep-felt. From that moment he was resolved upon living a new life —one of liberality and charity. He portioned out a certain amount to be set apart for daily distribution to the poor. With this change came others, and his house was soon one of the best regulated in that city, and he was esteemed by all for his benevolence and uniform good conduct.

* An accountant or book-keeper.

In the same city with Dushwant resided a dancing-girl, named Kamsaina, who, having become acquainted with the high reputation which the merchant had attained for profuseness and generosity, resolved upon calling daily at his house to amuse him with her singing. One day it occurred to her that she had dreamed over-night of Dushwant having injured her chastity. Under this impression she proceeded to the palace of the king, laid a formal complaint against the merchant, and demanded justice. The king, upon the girl's declaration, decided that Dushwant should pay the customary fine for such offences—1,25,000 rupees. After the decision had been recorded, Dushwant was sent for to appear before the king and his council, there to be subjected to interrogatories before the public assembly. As he was ignorant of the cause which procured him the honor of the king's summons, and being, as our readers will have perceived, innocent of any guilt, he was naturally enough thrown into a maze of perplexity; and his astonishment may be better imagined than described, when the king made known to him the accusation that had been brought against him. By dint of cross-questioning and much labour he made the girl acknowledge, though not in direct terms, that her charge was founded on a mere dream, which had become so deeply rooted in her mind as to appear a reality. Having gained this advantage over his opponent, the merchant addressed the king in the following words:—"This being only, as your majesty has seen, a charge founded on a dream, or coined to extort money from me, I do not see that I am liable to the fine your majesty has been pleased to inflict upon me; and I trust you will see the impropriety of enforcing it in a case, like the present, of an imaginary wrong said to have been done." The girl on this became so exasperated as to indulge in the most abusive epithets and unbecoming language towards Dushwant, notwithstanding that she was in the presence of the king and his whole court. This so affected poor Dushwant, that he agreed to pay the fine, and thus put a stop to the volley of abusive

words that was directed against him; at the same time proclaiming his innocence with a loud voice, and protesting against the whole proceeding as being illegal and informal, as well as unjust and tyrannical. He then sent for his cashier, and ordered the amount to be brought into court. While, however, Dushwant was in the act of making over the money, it occurred to him that he had not consulted once, throughout the whole of this proceeding, his invaluable and bosom friend, the parrot; he thought that by representing the injustice of the case to him, the good sense and intelligence which the bird displayed on every occasion of emergency might perchance enable him to devise some means to extricate him from the dilemma in which he found himself placed; so he solicited the king to allow him time to send for the parrot, before paying down the money. Having obtained the king's consent to this step, a messenger was immediately despatched, and the bird brought into the presence of the king and the assembled courtiers. He was placed in an elevated position, and made acquainted with all the details of the occurrence. The parrot seemed much surprised at the revelations made to him, and still more so at the daring act of injustice on the part of the king, of whom he enquired, and of his councillors, how they could possibly be so blind as not to see through the guile of the girl, and the unworthy motives which led her into such an act. He begged the king to countermand the order for the fine, and then, in an address fraught with much politeness and good sense, entreated that his majesty would not permit himself to be thus hoodwinked by a mercenary woman. So saying, the parrot desired that a large looking-glass, of which there were many in the palace, might be brought to him; when the domestic came forward with the glass, the parrot ordered the amount of the fine levied by the king to be placed in front of it, which having been done, he spoke in this wise, addressing himself in the first instance to the complainant in the case:—"Is it true, then, as you have

advanced before his majesty and the council, that last night Dushwant appeared before you in a dream, and injured your person?" "Yes," rejoined the dancing-girl, with much impudence, "he positively did." "Very well, then," said the parrot, "you may take by way of compensation the cash reflected in the glass, but do not dare to meddle with the cash itself. The punishment will be of a like kind with the injury alleged to have been inflicted: you dreamed the injury done, and in like manner is the punishment reflected. Justice is satisfied, and so must you be." At these words the disappointed girl trembled violently, with a sensation of mingled rage and conscious humiliation; disappointed avarice no doubt contributed to the effect produced. To be baulked when about to receive the reward (as she thought but a while ago) of her well-concerted and well-directed plan, was too much,—to grasp now only the shadow, while the substance which she had fully and confidently calculated upon, had fled. There she stood, the picture of despair and disappointment, eyeing alternately the heap of gold and, as she thought, her inveterate enemy the parrot, who had been the cause of so much mischief. At length the parrot broke the silence by saying to the girl, "As you cannot reach the money through the glass, no more could Dushwant have injured you in your dream. Begone, slut! and do not dare to present yourself again before the king." She was then ignominiously expelled, and all retired, well satisfied with the turn the affair had taken. The merchant directed his man to take the money he had brought, and returned home, accompanied by his now more than ever esteemed friend the parrot, extremely happy at the termination of so unpleasant an affair; while the king and his courtiers were lost in amazement at the extraordinary ingenuity and presence of mind of the handsome and clever little bird.

The reputation of our feathery acquaintance spread with such rapidity after the decision he had made in the above case, as to become known throughout the length and breadth

of that populous town; and while all admired and praised him, there was one who conceived against him the deadliest hatred imaginable, and that person was the discomfited actress or dancing-girl against whom he had given his decision. Nothing short of the life of the parrot would satisfy her. Many were the designs she revolved in her mind to effect this purpose, till at last, an opportunity offering itself, she hit upon the following plan. It came to her knowledge that Dushwant's wife was in bed sick, and she thought this a fine chance to seek a reconciliation with Dushwant, and then, by her wiles and deception, to gain a mastery over him; this object once attained, every facility, she thought, would be afforded her for executing her foul work. Accordingly, one night, she decked herself out in her best clothes, so as to set off her charms and symmetry of shape to the best advantage, and went into Dushwant's house. She entered his apartment by a secret door that was known to her, and noiselessly approached the bed on which Dushwant lay alone, and sat beside him. The unsuspecting Dushwant was fast asleep, and had been so for some time, as the night was far advanced when this temptress set out from her dwelling. Seated beside Dushwant, she began to bestow on him the softest caresses, and to call on him by the most endearing and loving epithets. Dushwant hereupon suddenly awoke, and was astonished to find a female form near him of such exquisite beauty, which the rays of the lamp that fell upon her displayed to great advantage, the mellowness of the light, added to the sombre shade of the room, rendering her smiling countenance and richly-jewelled bust like those of a houri, come to keep watch over the sleeping merchant in his now lonely bed-chamber. She appeared, indeed, the height of female perfection, and the softness of her manners and the ingratiating tone of her speech might have gone far towards overcoming a person of firmer principle than poor Dushwant. His first words were expressive of surprise at the visionary being, as he thought, before him. "Am I awake or asleep?" said he. After

gazing at her for awhile, and feeling his resolution of having nothing to do with a strange woman fast failing him, he drew the bed-clothes over his face, and composed himself to sleep, as if to shut out the temptress from his view. But she proceeded to address him, lavishing on him at the same time the most fond and melting caresses. "My dear sir," said she, "this is not a dream, as you imagine, but a reality. The humblest of your slaves, and the most devoted of your servants, is here to offer her love at your feet." The merchant rose in much anger at this announcement, and asked her how she dared clandestinely to enter his apartment at that unseasonable hour. "I have some slight notion of the reason," said he; "it is the hope of securing the money you were prevented from extorting from me at the court the other day that has brought you hither, and you have some new design for effecting your purpose. I set no value upon a few gold pieces; but leave me,—leave me, I tell you, and never more approach me." "I am in possession of much wealth," replied she, "through your benevolence and kind-heartedness. I no longer wish for more. Another and far more devouring passion has brought me here at the dead of the night;—I am dying of love for you! —it is fast consuming me,—and unless you give me proofs of its being reciprocated, alas! I feel I must inevitably perish, either by my own hands or with the fire within me. Say," and she threw herself on her knees, "may I hope that you will deign to pity me—to ease my poor heart of the pain which is now fast rending it in pieces? Oh, speak to me!—let me hear at least a few words of consolation ere you doom me to death and to perdition!" and she burst into tears. A woman in tears is a moving and dangerous spectacle, which few can withstand; when to this were added the position of this designing creature and the beauty of her person—her eyes glistening with every demonstration of love, and her bosom heaving in a whirlwind of passion, assumed though it was—we can well conceive the peculiar workings of the heart in one whose weak-

ness prompted him to concede at once to the lovely creature before him all she sued for; whilst a dread of the world, of his own household, of his wife in particular, bade him put an end to the meeting, and turn the frantic woman from his presence and the privacy of his room. Thus placed, need we wonder that a man of such weak parts as Dushwant was, should feel his scruples gradually fade away one after the other, until he was left wholly under the influence of a pretty and attractive woman, bathed in tears, and supplicating for his love in pathetic and forcible expressions? To cut the matter short, he was completely overwhelmed by her blandishments, and he fell into her embraces. Having spent the remainder of the night together, as the rays of the morn pierced through the flimsy curtains, Dushwant roused the partner of his guilt from the deep sleep in which she was plunged, and entreated her to be gone, lest the inmates of the house should suspect the occurrence of the preceding night, and thus render him not only the butt of all his friends, but, that which he most dreaded, the object of the just reproaches of an enraged wife. The actress slowly opened her eyes, and finding the merchant in just such a strait as she wished him to be in, asked for some token of their sojourn together; but she said that she did not wish for it then and there,—she only wanted him to pledge his word of honor that he would satisfy her on that head when she made the requisition; she said she was not sufficiently collected then to mention what it was to be, but would think over it, and name it on a future occasion. The merchant, anxious to rid himself of her presence, took the desired oath, and she went away chuckling inwardly at the success she had met with.

She now repaired to her house in all haste, and having bathed and changed her apparel, returned not long after to Dushwant's house, to claim the fulfilment of the promise he had made to her that morning. She said, "Sir, may I request you will be pleased to ratify the promise you so generously made to me last night? I have called expressly

for the purpose." The daring effrontery of the woman utterly confounded and disgusted the merchant. He kept his temper nevertheless, as he knew he was now in the power of this unprincipled creature, so he asked her to name what she wanted and to go her way, and never more to cross his threshold. With a smile of derision, and in tones of cutting sarcasm, she replied that her greatest ambition was to become the possessor of the parrot, owned by the merchant, who had but a short time ago exposed her to the ridicule of the whole court, and a very large audience besides. This request afflicted the merchant extremely, as the nature of his oath left him no way of escape from the obligation he had so unwisely entered into. Conscious of his error, he bitterly lamented the circumstances which had led him into it. 'Alas!' thought he, 'how injudiciously have I now behaved!—not only shall I now be deprived of my best and wisest counsellor, but oh! horror!—must I also endanger his life?' for he well knew the object of the woman in desiring so anxiously to become possessed of the bird. 'Ah me! what incalculable injury have I brought on myself!—can no means be devised whereby to preserve my beloved bird?' He tried to remonstrate with the actress, but she was inexorable. In this wretched state of mind he approached the tiny parrot, ensconced in his pretty cage in a corner of the house, and revealed to him the sad dilemma in which he was placed, and which he said was all the more to be deplored as it originated in his own inexcusable imprudence. "I am certainly undone, as well as Dushruth and Rookmangud, who ensnared themselves by their promise," said he, "and have brought this dire misfortune on you." He spoke with such vehemence, and was so truly affected, that he fell down beside the parrot's cage in an agony of grief. When he came to himself, the parrot, pitying his distress, told him to deliver him up to the woman without hesitation, and rather let him (the parrot) run the risk of losing his life than that the merchant should violate his oath. "An

oath," said the parrot, "is sacred, and must therefore be preserved inviolate. Do not break your promise on any account. You no doubt recollect the account given of the promises made by Shriyal and Chakravati—how faithfully they observed them, even to the very death. Listen to me," continued the parrot to Dushwant, "I will give you a brief account of king Myrodhwaj, who had commenced a certain sacrifice, when Kristna and Arjoon, assuming the guise of brahmihs—the former that of a Gooru, and the latter as his disciple,—appeared before him. Myrodhwaj, seeing them, received them with great respect, and besought them with much entreaty to make known to him their wants. Kristna said, 'I, with my son and pupil, were passing through the wood, when a tiger pounced upon my son and seized him. Seeing him in this awful position, I besought the tiger with streaming eyes not to injure my son; I said that he was an only child, the prop of my old age. The fierce animal replied, that he had been without a morsel of food for eight days successively, and that he would release my son only on one condition,—that I should, in lieu of my son, supply him with the flesh of another living person. He awaits my return, with my son in his possession as a hostage for the due fulfilment of the promise I was compelled under the circumstances to give him. On my way I heard that you were about to perform a sacrifice, and this induced me to wait on you, and to seek your aid in releasing my son from the tiger, and restore me to my wonted ease.' The king hereupon ordered one of his attendants to get some flesh to appease the hunger of the ferocious denizen of the forest. The brahmin, hearing this mandate, cried out to the king, that the tiger would accept of nothing else than the flesh of a living being. There was a pause, and the minister, who was present, suggested to the monarch that one out of the many malefactors that were imprisoned might be offered as food for the tiger. The brahmin again raised his voice, and said that the tiger had some knowledge of the sacrifice the king was about to perform,

and expressed a desire to partake of the king's flesh, and said that his majesty would not hesitate to offer himself up to save a fellow-being, and he a brahmin's son. 'I regret very much,' said the wily brahmin, 'that it should be so, but consider, your majesty, this is an only son of mine, the sole object of my affection, and the support of my declining years. My life must inevitably end with his, if your majesty will not deign to stretch forth a helping hand in this my greatest hour of need.' The king paused awhile, as if in deep thought, and considering that if he declined compliance with the brahmin's request he would lose an opportunity of evincing his virtue of self-sacrifice, for which he was far and deservedly famed, consented to immolate himself for the brahmin's son. He ordered a saw to be brought, and with his own hand he courageously set about sawing himself asunder. When he had cleaved his head in two, and had reached to his gullet, Kristna assumed his usual form, and appeared before him in all the brightness and dazzling splendour of an ethereal being, and, with an approving smile, and with fondness depicted in every lineament of his face, embraced the king. The severed head became instantly healed, and, with many blessings upon the head of this valorous and high-minded monarch, Kristna disappeared. In like manner," continued the parrot, "should you preserve your promise intact, and deliver me up." The merchant could not possibly reconcile himself to the idea of parting with his favorite companion, but under the circumstances he had no alternative. So, after much time spent in bewailing his misfortune, and with tears and sighs, he made a desperate effort, and consigned the bird to his future mistress—*murderess* would become her better. No sooner did she receive the bird than she exultingly held the cage up to her face, and took a long and revengeful look at the author of her greatest humiliation, as she thought; and she smiled with great satisfaction as she pondered on the revenge she had it now in her power to take upon this helpless creature. The parrot knew well that all this boded

no good to him, and he employed his mind in endeavouring to invent some scheme by which to thwart the woman's unrelenting purpose. When she passed out of the presence of the merchant, she spoke to the parrot, and said, "You cannot now escape from my hands. Do you recollect how shamefully you exposed me some time ago before the king and his council? We shall soon see if you will now assume the air and tone with which you addressed me on that occasion." Having reached her dwelling, she called for her cook, and ordered her to kill the bird and have him well dressed for her meal, against her return from her accustomed visit to the king's palace. Saying this, and transferring the poor parrot to the *tender* care of the matron, she went away on her visit. The cruel cook, who took after her mistress, plucked off the bird's feathers by way of prelude to what was to follow, and left him in that state on the ground while she went into the kitchen to procure a knife with which to cut off his head. The cook did not readily find the knife, and while engaged in searching for it the (to all appearance) unfledged bird looked about him for some means of escape, and happening fortunately just then to think of the spirit Veytal, he offered up a prayer to him, and conjured him up before him from the dark regions he inhabited. In the twinkling of an eye he attended the summons, and, at the request of the parrot, enabled him to fly with the rapidity of lightning, and to disappear in a drain far from the dwelling of the inhuman actress and her still more merciless wretch of a cook. Shortly after this occurrence the latter returned from the kitchen, brandishing a large knife and seeking her victim, but he was gone, to her great alarm and discomfiture. And what was worse, she had no time to go to the bazar to purchase another bird in lieu of the one she had lost by her carelessness, as she expected every moment her mistress would return. She, however, contrived to get one from a neighbour, though of a different species, prepared the dish, and had it ready for her mistress, who returned shortly after. The meal was imme-

diately ordered to be placed on the board, and the actress sat down to it with much glee. The first dish that was served up was the one containing the supposed parrot, which she ate with much gusto and appetite, chewing every bone with great vehemence, under the impression that they were those of her bitterest enemy,—the one who had brought so much ridicule upon her; and every time this conviction flashed across her mind she renewed her attack on the savoury dish, flavoured more pungently by her own spirit of hatred and revenge, little thinking that the object of her attack was far beyond her reach, and was perhaps even then exulting at the trick he had played upon her, and of which as yet the cook was alone cognisant. We will leave the actress, however, to her meal, and return to the parrot.

He did not stop in his flight, which he had been enabled to accomplish by the aid of Veytal, until he had reached a haven of security. He thanked God for his mercy, and for recalling to his mind the existence of Veytal at that critical moment, whereby alone he had been enabled to effect his escape from the perilous situation in which he had so recently been placed. His denuded feathers had been restored, and he reflected with gratification on the distance he had placed between himself and the cruel wretch who would have deprived him of his life. The place where he had taken refuge was a temple, dedicated to the goddess Kallika, a renowned and sacred place, the scenery around which was most enchantingly beautiful. It was situated out of the town, and a large smooth lake was hard by, which reflected in a thousand fanciful shapes the clustering trees of every size and description that grew on its banks, loaded with the fruits of autumn.

CHAPTER IV.

The dancing-girl comes to the temple to perform her devotions—The parrot (in the character of the goddess) addresses her, promising to gratify her with anything she may desire—He then ridicules and disgraces her, under the pretext of imposing ceremonies necessary for the realisation of her wishes—Koobjuck the sentinel, who personated King Vickram, becomes tyrannical, and oppresses his subjects—A brahmin threatens him with the vengeance of heaven, and sets out in search of King Vickram—He arrives at a temple dedicated to Shiva, where he meets a young prince named Duntsain, who relates his sorrows—The brahmin proceeds towards the city of Sendoornuggry, and halts at the temple of the goddess Kallika—The parrot overhears the brahmin's lamentations and prayers, and converses with him—He owns himself to be Vickram, and sets out for Oujein, with the brahmin—On the way they meet Prince Duntsain at the temple of Shiva, and engage in an attempt to gain the Princess Padmavuntty as his wife—The princess imposes a difficult task upon King Vickram, who has assumed the form of a brahmin, and the brahmin that of a parrot—He calls upon Veytal, who appears, and promises to assist him.

In the verdant grove briefly sketched in the conclusion of the last chapter, roamed the parrot after regaining his liberty in so miraculous a manner. The first night was spent on the boughs of one of the trees. On the morrow, he directed his attention to the exploration of the beauties and natural attractions the locality presented. The trees were loaded with delicious fruit, tempting to the eye and inviting to the palate. Here, then, might have been seen the little parrot, luxuriating among the vegetation, and enjoying all that nature in her mildest and most refreshing form presented to the view, flying from tree to tree, tasting of one fruit and then of another, and thus, by turns, of all the variety that could there be found. In this peaceful occupation he was startled by the sudden appearance of his dire enemy the actress, and her slave, the tool of her follies and crimes. They both emerged from under the clump of trees abutting

on the main road, and were proceeding apparently into the temple for the purpose of paying their vows and adoration to the goddess there. He watched them entering, and a sudden thought of revenging the injury offered to his person, and his intended murder, crossed his mind; so he preceded them by a speedy flight, and sat behind the idol representing the goddess, watching them as they came in, though he himself could not be seen. It was customary for the actress to pay her daily devotions at the shrine of Kallika. After performing her ablutions, she approached the idol and bowed before it; after remaining in that posture for some time, she stood up in a reverential attitude, clasped her hands together as if in supplication, and, with her eyes fixed on the image, spoke as follows:—"Oh, goddess! may this my invocation have its due effect. I adore thee! may this my prayer be heard. Have mercy upon me! Pardon my manifold sins, and preserve me from all future evils!" She had scarcely ended when a voice issued forth, apparently from the idol, saying, "Kamsaina, I am much pleased with your devotion, and with the subject of your prayer: ask of me what you may think will be of use to you." "I have all that I can wish for, through your kind aid and beneficence; but I sincerely hope that the god Indra* will send for me from the heavens, for my singing and dancing." "You will most assuredly derive much benefit in the court of Indra; but in the first place," replied the pretended goddess,—for our readers will no doubt have perceived that it was the parrot who was speaking, from the position he had taken up but a short time before,—"in the first place, there are one or two things to be most strictly observed. Tomorrow morning, before the sun rises, you must give in my name all your wealth, whatever you may be possessed of, in charity, after which come immediately and meet me in this place; bring with you a barber, purify yourself, shave your head, put ashes on your body, and expose your naked person to my view: do not appear

* The chief of the angels, and god of the sky.

in company with any one, and let all this be accomplished by the middle of the day. The *vemon** will then descend from heaven, with instruments sounding to welcome your arrival at the gates of Paradise, and the assembly of Indra will bear you company. Return quickly home, and perform all I have directed you to do." Upon hearing these consoling words, and the promise of being taken up to heaven, she retraced her steps with hope and great joy, after having prostrated herself a second time before the idol, and poured out a flood of enraptured thoughts, and expressions of her willingness to act as she had been bidden. On her arrival home she set about distributing her riches, which consisted of money, jewels, horses, cattle, and all the other paraphernalia of a prosperous household. She gave all these to the beggars and brahmins who had crowded round her residence when her resolution to give all she possessed in charity had become known, and she was quite elated with the idea that in return for all this sacrifice she was to be translated to heaven. Those who profited by the benevolence of the woman were one and all loud in their praise of her person and her proficiency in singing, which had enabled her to amass together so large a fortune as was then displayed to their wondering eyes. She was quite gratified at what she heard, and frequently said, by way of replying to these encomiums, "If I merely bestow a small portion of my wealth or goods in alms, I shall receive double for it from Indra, when I shall have the opportunity, which I am in a fair way of securing, of delighting him with my songs," little dreaming, poor deluded being, that the parrot had even then commenced his revenge for what she had done and had meditated doing. After having parted with all she possessed, and the day also having drawn to a close, she retired for the night, and prepared by sound and refreshing sleep for the fatigues of the morrow. In the morning she rose betimes, and, securing the attendance of a barber, as she had been directed the previous day, set out to the temple,

* A celestial self-moving car.

her slave accompanying them. At the temple she directed the barber to shave off her hair. He could not restrain his laughter on hearing this strange bidding, and hesitated to obey; but being pressed by her, and fearing her rage, he set about quietly removing this ornament of womanly beauty. At the same time the poor barber feared that this might be a whim of the moment on the part of the dame, and that when it passed away he might be called upon to account for the extraordinary deed; so he proceeded to acquit himself of the task with considerable hesitation. Before the barber placed his hand upon her clustering tresses, she repeatedly desired him to make no one acquainted with what he was then about to do: it was an affair of as much secrecy, she said, as it was of great moment and urgency. After having her head completely shaved, she undressed herself, and delivered her clothes to the slave, directing her to return with them in the evening. She then performed her ablutions, bathed in the lake, threw ashes on her body, and thus, in a complete state of nudity, prostrated herself before the idol, and addressed herself to deep and solemn meditation. She thought that she was about to receive the reward of all the sacrifices and indignities to her person she had borne for the last few days. She remained in that attitude for some time, inwardly addressing herself to the goddess, beseeching that all her failings and crimes might be forgiven, and that she might, according to the promise vouchsafed to her the previous evening, be received into the heavens. As the sun began to reach its meridian, the heat grew oppressive in the temple; and the deluded being, prostrated in all humility before the shrine of Kallika, found it would be intolerable so to remain much longer. She changed her posture, and happening at the same time to look up to the sky through one of the openings for light in the temple, she beheld the parrot perched on a tree opposite, and exulting as it were over her misfortune. She immediately recognised the bird, and seemed quite abashed as well as surprised at seeing him alive, after she had, as

she thought, made a meal of him. She remained with her gaze rivetted on the parrot, who addressed her from his lofty seat—lofty in more senses than one. "Wretch!" said he, "you made great attempts to deprive me of my poor life for the imaginary wrong I had done you, but in what have they resulted?—in heaping infamy and ridicule on yourself. You were haughty and proud, and in your pride despised me. You persuaded yourself that Indra would send for you to hear you sing, as you are thought by men to be a great proficient in that art; but such easy and happy conditions are not to be attained by you, or such as you. Now, deprived of your wealth, your revenge ungratified, with shame and humiliation, you must retire. Go, then, and never more appear in public; for the person who behaves arrogantly deserves an equal infamy." It was now evening, and the confidential slave of the disappointed actress was anxiously awaiting the return of her mistress, who, with mingled emotions of rage and shame, hastily clothed herself, wrapping her now bald head in a piece of black cloth, and went home, swearing vengeance against the little bird, and deploring the loss of her immense wealth and property, which she had so inconsiderately, as she now thought, divided amongst the beggars of the city. In such a state of mind, and having fasted all the day, she was naturally enough quite fatigued and hungry when she reached her dwelling; she immediately repaired to her now deserted and desolate room, to take her supper, after which, as she could not bring herself to attend to anything further, she retired early to bed, filled with deep and bitter anguish at the sudden and unexpected change in her fortune. Before retiring she left a message with her slave that if the usual invitation should arrive for her to attend at the king's palace, to return for answer that she was indisposed, and could not therefore present herself before his majesty. As may well be imagined, the actress spent a restless night, what with the contest within her between inveterate hatred of the parrot, grief for the severe loss that his trick had entailed

upon her, and plans for her future conduct. We will leave her for the present, and return to Koobjuck, the sentinel, whom we left reigning in the place of his king and the rightful owner of the throne.

This man exercised all the authority with which his new position had invested him, with the iron hand of a despot. His subjects were becoming discontented and insubordinate, under the accumulation of the evils that had been heaped upon them by the new monarch. They began even to doubt the identity of the person now ruling with their old and revered monarch Vickramadetea; and, as we said before, the belief in transmigration being common in the city, they were in a manner convinced that the new monarch before them was but an usurper, who by some unknown and unaccountable means had contrived to assume the body of Vickram. Nevertheless, they submitted to his oppressive measures. The original gifts and grants in lands and villages bestowed by Vickram were revoked and taken back, as crown property, and from those who were allowed to retain them, which in some few cases happened, he demanded a moiety of the whole produce; from those who were in the receipt of annual *nemnooks** and pensions, he deducted a third; many of the officers' salaries were reduced to the smallest possible pittance; and his subjects were otherwise subjected to great and glaring injustice, and were consequently one and all much distressed.

It happened that about this time a brahmin named Somedut arrived at Koobjuck's court, to receive his annual gifts. He was a sage, a learned man, and an ornament to his calling and society. Koobjuck enquired of his ministers who this brahmin was. They replied, "Can your majesty be ignorant of one who has for a long time enjoyed your majesty's warmest friendship? He has been in the habit of coming here regularly every year to receive his customary allowances. His reputation for wisdom and learning is well known to your majesty, as well as to all your subjects."

* Stipends.

"Well, then," said the king, "pay him a quarter of his gift; there is no necessity for giving him more: do as I bid you." The brahmin was astounded at this unusual proceeding, and very injudiciously made the following remark:—"I cannot think you act as becomes your exalted position. Vickramadetea always entertained me at his court with every demonstration of respect and pleasure, and not unfrequently sent me back loaded with presents in addition to the regular allotment; indeed he was in all respects a most humane, just, and discerning prince. You are placed in authority over this kingdom, and, to acquit yourself well of the trust, should prove a father to the people you rule. From what I now observe, and other circumstances that have come under my notice, you are unworthy of your dignity. I feel assured that God will sooner or later visit you with his severe judgment, on account of the course you now pursue, and the outrages and cruel barbarities you are inflicting upon your subjects." Koobjuck, highly indignant at the daring of the brahmin, directed an officer in attendance to take him immediately from his sight, and to turn him out of the city with ignominy. "Tell him," said he, "to go in search of his mighty Vickramadetea, as he calls him, and if he succeeds in finding this imaginary person, he may perhaps meet with satisfaction." "Have a little patience," said the brahmin, "I will endeavour to find him, and bring him here, depend upon it. It would be in vain that my mother carried me for nine months in her womb, if I fail in this. Allow me to remind you that the Indra and Bhusmasoor were not overlooked by Almighty God, but were punished for their barbarity." Saying this, and before the officer who had been ordered to remove him could put his orders into execution, the brahmin bounded past him, and was on his way to look for the rightful king, as he had said. He travelled from one city to another, through unknown and unexplored wilds, over hills and dales, and into every place where he thought there was any likelihood of meeting with or hearing of the

monarch he was in search of. Neither heat nor cold, hunger or thirst, could damp the ardour with which he prosecuted his pursuit. He anxiously enquired of those he met with in his wanderings whether they could supply him with any information regarding the person he sought, or knew where he could be found or heard of. His food during this long tour consisted of the wild fruits of the earth. At night he sought repose under a tree, or in the shelter of a rock, if he happened to be near one; or, if by chance he was overtaken by the clouds of night near some habitable locality, he found refuge in a temple or *dhurumshala** from the inclemencies of the night wind and sometimes of the pelting rain. He never remained in one place longer than was necessary to recruit his failing strength, and that never beyond the hours of night: he was up again in the morning, and on his search for the lost king. He had journeyed in this manner for some time, when he came to a limpid lake, and a temple dedicated to Shiva; into this he went, and thus addressed the idol before him:—"Oh, lord Shiva! be propitious to the undertaking in which I am now engaged, and assist me in speedily obtaining a sight of my lost friend." He then prostrated himself, and having remained so for some time, seated himself on a *sopa*†; whilst there, engaged in revolving the past and concerting plans for his future movements, he perceived a young and handsome prince, very interesting in appearance, and richly attired, performing his religious duties. When he had finished his devotions, the brahmin approached him, and addressed him in the following terms:—"Pray, on what account, if I may be permitted to ask, are you engaged in these austerities and pious practices, so uncommon in one of your youth and apparent condition?" The prince replied, "Your question only gives me pain: of what avail is it that I should disclose my grief, which is gnawing my heart's core, to you? Can

* A caravanserai.

† A branch of the verandah.

you bring me relief?" Somedut replied, that as yet he did not know whether or not he could afford the prince any relief, "but," said he, "if you will deign to acquaint me with the cause, it may not be out of my power to devise some measures by which the wishes of your heart may be accomplished. I must inform you that I do not request your confidence from any motives of curiosity, but only because you seem troubled and ill at ease. The hand of death is apparently on you, and unless some speedy remedy be applied to check the tyrant in his course, I fear lest you may succumb. Pray, therefore, unbosom yourself to me. I may possibly possess the means of alleviating your sorrow, if not of removing its cause." The prince then enquired of the brahmin who he was, whence he had come, and where he was travelling to. The brahmin having satisfied the prince on these several points, the latter began as follows :—

"About two *yojuns** from where we now stand, there is a subterraneous dwelling, with a gate leading to it, wherein dwells with her father a princess named Pudmavuntty; it is a stately palace which they inhabit. He who is to win the hand of this princess, who is transcendantly beautiful, must consent to a condition, one of the most difficult and hazardous that can well be imagined. It is this: a vessel, filled with oil and other inflammatory liquids in a boiling state, is placed on a furnace, and the man, whoever he is, must bathe himself in it by the aid of a *sinka*† suspended over the same. If he effects this without injury to himself, the princess will accept him for her future lord and master. She is without exception the most beautiful woman the world ever produced. I have several times attempted to go through the ordeal, but have not had sufficient courage to proceed with it. On each occasion of my failure I have returned to this place, and in silence poured out the inward workings of my heart before the shrine of the god to whom

* A measure of length, equal to four coss, or eight English miles.

† A sling, the string or loop of which is attached to either end of a pole or yoke, to receive the burden.

this temple is dedicated, as you found me a short time ago. Twelve long years have rolled over my head since I first saw the princess. I reside in the city of Chundragerry; my father is named Chundrasain, a powerful king, who still reigns in that kingdom. My name is Duntsain. I love this princess too much to hope for any peace of mind while we remain apart from each other. I came down here to make another essay of my courage; but the arduous condition attached to the winning of the princess has quite wearied me. Still my passion for her is daily gaining strength, and I cannot restrain it. Death would indeed be preferable to remaining in this dreadful state of agitation and suspense."

During this narration, the prince became much affected, and appeared pressed down by the weight of his grief. The brahmin, however, assured him that if he would have a little patience and moderate his grief, he would in a few days put him in a way to become possessed of the object of his affection; and, after adding some further words of consolation, he withdrew.

The brahmin, having left the prince, seated himself in the shade of the nearest tree, and racked his brains, not how to bring about the wishes of the unfortunate prince he had just returned from, but how to gain some information of his sovereign, the good and beloved Vickramadetea. The sun having run his course, was now fast giving place to the shades of evening, and the refreshed traveller once more was afoot, and wending his onward course. A few hours' smart walking brought him to the city of Sendoornuggry. As he approached it he walked in the direction of a temple erected in the outskirts of the town, with a beautiful lake beside it. It was the same temple and lake, as our readers will have surmised, in which the parrot sought refuge after his narrow escape from death at the hands of the inhuman cook of the famed actress. The traveller entered the temple, and paid his devotions to the goddess Kallika, and then returned to the inviting shade of the clump of trees on the borders of

the lake. It so happened that the tree under which he sat was the one most loved by the parrot. The brahmin, after having adjusted his clothes, which had been disarranged by his recent travelling, raised his voice and prayed loudly. "Oh, supreme ruler of the universe!" said he, "do not permit me to go back empty-handed from my travels. I solicit no other favor than that you will be pleased to grant me an interview with my old patron and just king Vickramadetea. The world does not often produce such a rare and virtuous prince: he is rich in every good quality." Before the brahmin took up his position under the tree, the unfortunate parrot, who was perched up aloft, had observed him approaching. He now said to the brahmin, "My good sir, you seem to have come a long distance, and you are greatly fatigued, no doubt, by walking in this hot season of the year. Pray be seated. Please inform me respecting your destination, whom you seek, and your reasons for undertaking so long a journey." The traveller was extremely pleased at the consideration and sympathising manner in which he was addressed. He suspected something, but could not well define even to himself what that suspicion was. He said to the parrot, however, "Oh, excellent parrot! too truly am I fatigued, both in body and mind; but I feel much relieved of my anxiety at beholding you and hearing you speak. If you are not what you seem to be, pray tell me. I suspect you to be the king of whom I am in search. If so, hasten your return to the city of Oujein. I entreat you, lose no time; and make me acquainted with the circumstances attending your metamorphosis. If you will afford me no comfort in this respect, I shall certainly die of grief." "By what means," said the parrot, "would you know again the king? Perhaps he is not in human shape." "Why not?" said the traveller; "he is a most excellent personage, and I can point him out by virtue of his wisdom, exquisite beauty, and other rare qualities. I am sanguine I shall soon meet him. I see marvellous signs that forebode it. My hand is quivering, my right eye twitching, and the bird

Pingla* frequently perches near me. From these signs I am led to believe that it will not be long ere my desire to behold Vickramadetea be accomplished." Having listened to all that the traveller had said, the parrot, at one bound, approached him, and declared himself to be Vickramadetea. He then related how he had become a parrot, his proceedings while in the possession of the Bahooroopee, in what manner he had been bought by Dushwant, the barbarous attempt of Kamsaina, the actress, against his life, how she became deprived of her riches through his instrumentality, and all the hardships he had endured. He dwelt largely on each of the circumstances attendant upon his adventures. Lastly, thanking the brahmin for his sincerity and gratitude towards him, which were exemplified by the trouble he had taken to seek him at so great a distance from Oujein,—passing over mountains, through wastes unknown, and foreign cities, where he must have encountered a variety of dangers, disappointments, and delays, and all the hardships and privations attendant upon such a journey,—the bird assured the brahmin that he would at all times and ever after remember, with deep gratitude and profound sentiments of love and esteem, the sacrifices and inconveniences he had been put to for his sake. "My dear Vickramadetea," said the brahmin, "I have certainly endured much for you, but the wish of my heart being realised, they are no longer thought of, still less dwelt upon. I now feel a most delightful sensation of pleasure that is undefinable. I am, now that I have found you, supremely happy." And he held the parrot to his bosom, and loaded him with kisses and fond embraces. He made the parrot acquainted with the treatment he had received from the infamous Koobjuck, when he presented himself at court for his yearly allowance; nor did he forget to relate the case of the unfortunate prince whom he had found at his devotions, and practising austerities and severities upon his person, at the temple, and

* A sort of crane, the appearance of which is said to be a good omen.

the assurance he had given him that he would exert all his powers to secure for him the desire of his heart—the handsome princess. Vickramadetea's nobleness prompted him to attend to the wants of others, ere he proceeded with anything for himself; so he expressed to the brahmin his willingness to proceed to the place where the young prince of whom he spoke was to be met with, and promised that he would assist in the endeavour to obtain the hand of the princess for the anxious and devoted lover. The parrot and the brahmin passed the night together under the same tree, and in the morning, Somedut placed him on his shoulder and retraced his steps towards the temporary abode of prince Duntsain. The prince saw the brahmin with the parrot approaching, and awaited them with anxiety depicted on his countenance. When they came near to him he saluted Somedut, and addressed him thus:—"My dear Somedut, since your departure I have been placed in a worse position than that in which you found me on your first visit. My passion is killing me gradually, my patience is fast wearing out, my courage fails me more than ever, and I am the most wretched of human creatures." The brahmin replied, "Look here, this bird is the king Vickramadetea, and he will be the means of procuring you your wishes," and he placed the bird on the prince's hand, who prostrated himself in all respect before it. The prince was pleased, and a gleam of joy shot through his withered heart. He likewise made his obeisance, entreating both the king and Somedut not to suffer him any longer to remain a prey to the anguish he had borne for twelve long years and more, but to take pity upon him, and to fulfil the promise they had vouchsafed to make him in their kindness of heart as early as possible. The parrot told his friend Somedut that he wished him to learn the charm of changing his natural shape and appearance, as it was necessary they should mutually exchange their conditions: in this way he said he would be able to bring about speedily the prince's desire. Somedut consented at once, and commenced to learn the mysterious

charm ; when he became sufficiently versed in it to answer present purposes, they were each of them transformed: Vickramadetea became a brahmin, and the brahmin a parrot. This bird was delivered into the hands of Prince Duntsain, who, together with the bird and the newly-created brahmin, proceeded to the gate of the princess' subterraneous dwelling. Having reached it, the prince and the parrot remained outside, while the brahmin entered alone, and did not stop till he had reached the magnificent palace, situated in the centre of a vast enclosure. He perceived near the palace, in an opposite direction, the whole of the machinery which had been represented to him. He went on till he came up to a number of slaves loitering about. He desired one of them to go instantly and inform his mistress Pudmavuntty that a stranger had arrived, willing to win her hand on the stipulated terms. The slave having reported the arrival of the brahmin to his mistress, introduced him by her sanction into her appartment, which was constructed in a most magnificent style, and at enormous cost, by the most skilful architect of the time. The walls and massive pillars were covered with numerous beautiful representations of beasts and birds, in paintings of gold, with trees of verdant enamel ; then, passing a hall, he was agreeably surprised to see one of the finest orchards a man can well conceive but rarely sees, in which the wonderful and tasteful arrangement of the trees and shrubs, their luxuriant growth, the diversity of the fruits, some few of which he had never before seen or heard of, their freshness and delicacy, and the sweet perfume wafted along by the gentle play of the breeze that was then blowing, all conspired to overpower him with a sensation of unalloyed pleasure for the time. The flower-garden was not less extraordinary in its kind : it was, as in the case of the orchard, arranged with much tasteful skill, and the fragrance issuing from a thousand different sources was a luxury vouchsafed to few. The sweet warblings of a number of birds added to the grandeur and attractions of the place. In short, whoever entered this domicile could not help being

transported with ecstacy at the many and varied sources of enjoyment and pleasure that were there to be met with. The brahmin found that the Princess Pudmavuntty, the mistress of all these rarities, was herself the rarest of all rarities. She was so handsome that fancy could not possibly picture a more perfect being. She was dressed in the richest and costliest linen, and wore precious stones of immense value and in great quantity. When she saw the brahmin advancing towards her, she welcomed him in a very courteous manner, and thus spoke to him :—"I have long been expecting a person like yourself; your looks convince me that you will soon become master of the art by which alone any one can obtain my hand. I sincerely hope you will not prove unworthy of the venture you have made, but that, by a successful execution of your arduous task, you will succeed in establishing a right to claim me in marriage." The supposed brahmin replied that he would strive his utmost to become capable of giving adequate proof of his sincerity. He then approached the vessel, called to mind the supreme power of God, and, before ascending in the *sinka*, took a small portion of a peculiar description of grass, and, having pronounced some words connected with a charm over it, threw it into the oil which was boiling up, and descended at once into it through the *sinka* that was suspended. It is wonderful to relate that the oil suddenly became cold and calm! He remained for a few moments in it, turning from one side to another, and he sustained not the slightest injury thereby. The princess, seeing this success, came running with a garland of flowers in her hand to encircle the neck of her future lord, as is usually the case among princesses. She had herself witnessed the prodigy, and there was no mistaking it. She requested him to embrace the earliest opportunity for solemnising their marriage ceremony; and, putting forth her hand, while encircling his neck with the string of flowers, she said, "I am fully satisfied with your might, and will irrevocably become yours. Pray make haste and come out." "You

are now mine, and whatever I shall bid you perform you must agree to in all obedience," said the brahmin in reply. "Yes, my lord," said she, "I can truly affirm henceforth I am your slave, entirely disposed to comply with all your wishes." The brahmin immediately came out of the vessel, and declared to her the particular case of the unfortunate Prince Duntsain,—that he had, during a period of twelve years, practised religious austerities, in the hope of conciliating the gods in his favor, in order to become possessed of her,—and that, therefore, she must of necessity marry him. She, having already promised obedience to his commands, after reflecting for a short time remembered that she had done wrong in thus pledging her word. "I will, however," said she aloud, "if you wish it, attend to the request of Prince Duntsain; but you must first oblige me in one respect, otherwise I shall not do so." "Do not hesitate to make me acquainted with your wish," replied the brahmin, "for I am ready to oblige you in any way you can point out, so long as you agree to take the prince for your future husband." She promised to explain in the evening, and in the mean while asked him to partake of a meal with her in her apartments, with which he complied. When it was night, and they had partaken of the meal, they seated themselves on a couch in deep conversation; after some time had elapsed in this way, the brahmin asked her to communicate to him what she had said in the morning was to be the condition of her taking Prince Duntsain for her future lord. "I do not wish to ask you for any favors, or to put you to any inconvenience," said the princess, "all I desire is, that you will make me laugh and speak four different times successively; I will then do as you bid me. Failing in this, however, I must give you distinctly to understand that I will not accept of the prince for my husband." The brahmin felt disconcerted at this proposition, but he immediately thought of Veytal, whom he instantly summoned to the spot. He appeared to Vickramadetea, but remained invisible to all others. Vickramadetea

told him the circumstances in which he was placed, and besought his kind offices. The spirit promised them, and said, "My good sir, be easy—be always merry and cheerful. I shall not fail to do before the princess that which will cause her to relax her rigidity and laugh outright, and thus will you gain your end; and what is more, she will at the same time be thankful to you for it, instead of viewing it, as she now does, with an unfavorable eye." So saying he departed; and with this interview between Vickramadeca and Veytal we close the present chapter.

CHAPTER V.

Vickram reposes in the palace of Princess Pudmavuntty—Veytal appears, in the form of a parrot, and commences to relate the history of King Bhudrasain, his son Soorsain, and the princess his wife.

KING VICKRAMADETEA, under the guise of the brahmin, now reposed within the splendid and sumptuous palace of the Princess Pudmavuntty. At the same time the spirit of Veytal transformed himself into a parrot that was represented in one of the paintings on the wall, and came down and rested near where Vickramadetea and the princess were reposing. He began by stroking and flapping his wings in a sly and knowing manner. The princess, observing this unusual circumstance and great novelty, was exceedingly amused; having never before witnessed such a strange faculty in a bird, she involuntarily commenced laughing. The parrot, seeing this, redoubled his efforts: drawing a mark in front of him with his claw, he continued his tricks, and gave unmistakeable signs of his knowledge of the state of affairs between her and the man beside her, to whom he pointed from time to time. The brahmin, observing that the princess had laughed, thus addressed the parrot:—"Oh, beautiful, lovely, and knowing bird! may I now solicit of you a particular favour? I would you could be persuaded to relate to us one of the many amusing and pleasant stories which are doubtless stored in your little head, from the recounting of which the princess may derive both instruction and amusement, while I shall equally profit by it." The parrot replied, "I should consider it to be the height of presumption were I to attempt to do so at your desire, and without the express sanction of my mistress. I must therefore address myself first to the lady. I pray, madam," said the parrot, addressing the princess, "that you will be pleased

to grant your visitor the satisfaction he solicits, by permitting me to commence the story." The princess paid no attention to this, but continued silent. The bird, seeing how taciturn she had all of a sudden become, and knowing the cause, continued his supplication, saying, "I beseech you, oh, goddess! my adored angel, and most kind hostess! would that it were possible for me to express in adequate terms my feelings of joy on beholding you! I have seen and do see daily, during my perambulations, vast numbers of handsome women, acknowledged beauties, but never have my eyes beheld such heavenly charms concentrated in one single individual as I have now the inexpressible joy of paying homage to; indeed, I am so overcome with feelings of delight, that I can scarce be said to be in possession of my senses. Permit me, fair lady, to relate a truly interesting story, abounding in wit and mirth. Cast your eyes upon me, and allow me to proceed; it will afford much pleasure to the brahmin beside you, and no less to yourself. Your impenetrable silence affects me much, good mistress. I cannot form an idea as to the cause of the melancholy with which you appear to be overwhelmed, and which seems to have almost struck you dumb." The princess was seated in sullen silence, with her eyes fixed, and gazing intently on vacancy, and would neither bestow a single glance upon the parrot nor utter a word of encouragement to him. Amongst the numerous slaves and others surrounding the princess, was one who observed the efforts of the bird to attract her attention, and pitied his failure. She ventured to entreat her mistress that the parrot might be allowed to proceed with his story, and that she would deign to sanction it, as there was doubtless much pleasure to be derived from it. This being a favorite domestic of the princess, she obtained a hearing, and the princess was prevailed upon, though with much evident reluctance, to break silence. She ordered the parrot to proceed with his story.

On receiving the order, the bird seemed transported with joy, and instantly set about relating his tale.

"In the great and flourishing town of Bhadravutty," said he, "there reigned once a just and noble king named Bhudrasain. He was held in great repute for his virtues, and was endowed with qualities that rendered him deservedly esteemed by his subjects and all who knew him. It is therefore not to be wondered at that his kingdom was in profound peace, and the people contented and happy. They worshipped God according to their respective forms of religion, without let or hindrance, as this prince made it a point never to interfere with the consciences of his subjects, but to allow them to remain free and unshackled. In a word, they were mutually happy and free, both the sovereign and his subjects. Providence had in its liberality showered its choicest blessings upon this monarch, and there was but one drawback to the otherwise perfect bliss that he might be said to enjoy: this was nothing less than the want of a son to bear the weight of his crown and wield his sceptre during his declining years. The monarch was at this period advanced in years, though not to that extent when the hope of an issue is generally said to be lost. He was therefore very anxious to have the pleasure of seeing one of his line seated on the throne, ere he closed his earthly career. It was his constant practice to beseech heaven to grant his request, and no amount of charity was grudged in order to propitiate the gods, and to secure the prayers of the holy men to this end. One day, the king being seated in the audience hall, surrounded by his ministers and others, his mind still occupied with the paramount wish of his heart, a hermit called Soodew* arrived from the remote city of Dwarka. His form and person were far from prepossessing: with a face pale and languid, eyes sunken, and grisly hair, he might have been taken for one of those beings who are said to spend the best part of their lives in deserts, far from the habitations of man. But he was a sage, profoundly skilled in the sciences, and in all the branches of useful

* This hermit would seem to be the same who taught King Vickramadeten the art of transmigration.

knowledge; he was also learned in divine law. When he presented himself at court, the king, perceiving him, hastily descended from his throne, and prostrating himself before the withered creature, besought him to take his place on the throne, which, from the well-known qualities he possessed, the king said, he was most fitted to adorn. The hermit consented, whereupon the king (according to the Hindoo practice) worshipped the holy man. He then dismissed the officials of his court, save a few belonging to his household, and sent for the queen, after having first introduced the hermit into the private apartments of his palace. The queen approached the hermit with the same respectful demeanour that the king had observed, and in like manner paid her obeisance at the hermit's feet. The king and queen, as may well be supposed, consulted the hermit chiefly on the subject uppermost in their hearts, and in all their intercourse paid a marked deference to the sage. The hermit, observing the disinterested homage paid to him by them, bestowed his blessing upon both with great solemnity, and assured them they would speedily see their wish realised. The son that should be born to them would prove, he said, worthy of their exalted rank and position; his name would be handed down to distant ages for his brilliant conquests and many eminent virtues, and finally, he would enjoy long life, health, and happiness. After this, the time for their afternoon meal had arrived, and the hermit was invited to partake of every possible delicacy that the palace could afford. At the conclusion of this entertainment, the king perfumed the person of the hermit with choice scents, and entreated him, in the most affectionate and flattering terms, to give him some advice regarding the subject nearest his heart —that of obtaining male issue, to hand down his name and virtues to posterity. The hermit replied that such things were at the disposal of God alone, and that it was in the power of no man to give any advice by which such a consummation could be effected. The Divine Power above, he said, for reasons not known to us, often deprives us of this

pleasure and comfort, perhaps because we are not sufficiently obedient to his will, and that when we pray we fail to do so with humble reliance on Him. 'How often,' said he, 'do we not, even in extreme cases, place our faith rather in man, when our dependence in all things, even to the smallest item, should be on God alone! Go,' continued the hermit, 'perform certain sacrifices, open your inmost soul to heaven, seek the divine aid in humble supplication, and entreat all devout men and brahmins to join you in your prayers, and you may move God to grant your request; there is no other means. To God alone must you apply.' The king attended to all the hermit had said, and having assembled all the good and devout men in his realms, besought them to address their prayers to heaven for a prince to succeed him. The sacrifice ordered by the hermit was performed, and soon after the united prayers of the people and their sovereign were heard, and it pleased heaven in due time for the queen to prove with child. This event caused, not unreasonably, universal joy in the kingdom, and the king and queen were in addition filled with so profound a feeling of gratitude that they testified it in more ways than one. Among others, the king gave a general invitation to all the devout men and priests to assemble together in his palace on a certain day, and there to partake of his bounty in a style of princely magnificence. He treated them with profuse liberality, bestowing on them rich and costly presents in gold, jewels, and apparel, and they departed, extolling in a loud voice the generosity of the monarch, and the many virtues that adorned him. Not satisfied with this, he set apart a large amount of money to be distributed amongst the poor of his dominions, which elicited from them repeated blessings on his head. To the hermit he gave many a costly gift, in proof of the high estimation in which he was held; and in a flow of gratitude threw himself at his feet, and blessed him for the kind sympathy he had manifested in his behalf. The hermit soon afterwards retired, fully convinced of the greatness and power of the monarch, of which he had given him

such undeniable proofs. The king, with a small retinue, accompanied him a short distance out of the city, as a mark of deference. At the expiration of the usual time, the queen was delivered of a son, to the inexpressible joy of the king, who ordered sugar to be distributed throughout the whole city, in token of his joy at the event, and celebrated the happy occasion for twelve successive days, with all the pomp and pageantry that united wealth and power could command. The child was beautiful in the extreme, and, after consulting with the astrologers, who had calculated its nativity, the king gave it the name of Soorsain, and caused it to be trained up under the especial care and instruction of his royal parents, availing himself, when the child attained a proper age, of the services of competent instructors, who contributed to the education of the youthful prince in the different branches of study,—the arts, sciences, and everything requisite for him, who was ultimately to reign in those realms, to know. The prince showed great aptitude for learning, and, under the guidance of his able and experienced preceptors, he made rapid progress in his education. He was soon master of those branches which are preliminary to the acquisition of a high standard of knowledge. As he advanced in years, he advanced apace in knowledge, nor were his morals neglected. In due time, as his physical powers became developed, he applied himself with diligence and assiduity to the various manual exercises then in vogue. In archery he became proficient, and there were but few who could enter the lists against him. In person he was handsone, of middling stature, combining elegance and physical strength. He was graceful in his bearing, and winning in his manners, and though he displayed much of that haughtiness in his intercourse with men that a consciousness of superiority begets, yet it was so mild, and so naturally displayed, that it became him well, and added to rather than detracted from his worth and merit. He was, in short, loved by all who knew him, and was the light of his parents' eyes. Such then, was the son and heir of the equally loved and esteemed King Bhudrasain.

"It happened that as the prince advanced to manhood, he received a wound from one of Cupid's shafts: he became enamoured of a princess, daughter to a powerful monarch, whose beauty was the least of her perfections. He sued for her hand in due form, backed by the interest and power of his father and his own rare qualifications, and obtained it in marriage. The union was celebrated, under the most favorable auspices, in the city, and no expense was spared to give brilliancy and effect to the occasion. It was a joyous time when the marriage took place. The king invited his relatives as well as those of his son's wife, with numerous other guests, and entertained them for several days together in the most sumptuous manner; and when the festivities were ended, he sent them back loaded with presents.

"One day, King Bhudrasain, accompanied by his son and a small retinue, set out on a sporting excursion. They went into an adjoining wood, and while there, Bhudrasain was suddenly seized with the desire of witnessing his son's skill in archery, for which he was much famed. He called his son, and made him acquainted with his wishes; he then detached a part of his retinue for the purpose of waiting upon him, and he himself followed in person. Having arrived in the centre of the wood, the king directed his son to aim at a certain part of the forest at a distance, where a small object, scarce visible to the naked eye, was pointed out. While yet conversing, a wild boar suddenly appeared from amidst a clump of bushes, and, rushing past the prince and his father, attacked one of their followers with great determination and ferocity. The prince, acting on the impulse of the moment, with his usual bravery and dauntless courage, pursued the boar, in the hope of getting sufficiently near him to attack him with the short spear he carried in his hand. But the monster, seeing his pursuer, and conscious of danger, took to flight, and regained the shelter of a thickly-studded cover of trees, in the opposite direction. The prince still pursued the boar, and in the ardour of the chase forgot all personal danger. Keeping his eye steadily

fixed in the direction the boar had taken, he continued to follow him, and left his father and all the followers far behind him. The difficult road over which the prince pursued the boar rendered it impossible for him to come up to his victim as speedily as he could have wished; he nevertheless kept up the chase, passing, as he went, over valleys and by the side of precipices, through rugged paths and dangerous defiles. The king and his followers were anxiously awaiting his return, while every moment he was widening the distance between them. The boar, after having gone some miles, ensconsed himself in a cave, the prince remaining transfixed to the spot with fatigue and vexation. It pained him to think that all his efforts had proved fruitless for the capture of the forest denizen; and what mortified him still more was, that it would go far to convey an unfavorable opinion of his skill in archery and in the use of arms to the mind of his father, to please whom was the chief desire of his heart. However, he thought of retracing his steps back and relating all the occurrence to the king, but he found that he was quite fatigued by the exertions he had made, and his horse still more so; added to which he felt a burning thirst and a sensation of weakness which rendered him quite incapable of moving a step in obedience to his wish. In this state the clouds of night found him listlessly leaning against a tree. As the darkness thickened around him he became fully sensible of his condition, and the danger he was exposing himself to by remaining in that lonely and desolate place, perhaps to become a prey to the wild animals infesting the locality; so he strove to mount his horse, and succeeded in gaining his seat, but as he was suffering very severely from thirst, his first object was to go in search of water. Having roamed about for some time, he happened to reach the inviting banks of a lake of great extent, clear as crystal, with a variety of trees uniformly placed at a convenient distance from each other, and forming a delightful arbour, cool and refreshing to travellers and others who sought their friendly shade. The prince, as may well be

imagined, was transported with joy on seeing the lake; he alighted from his horse with great alacrity, but ere he quenched his own thirst he led his noble steed, who had borne by far the greater part of the fatigues of the day, into the lake. He then secured him to a tree, and approached the margin of the water, where, by repeated draughts of the liquid element, he satisfied his burning thirst. The water deities, observing his hands submerged in the water, took hold of them, and immediately conveyed him to their stately abode at the bottom.

"The king, his father, having in vain waited in painful suspense for the reappearance of his son from the woods in which he had lost sight of him, at length grew fearful that some unforeseen accident had occurred; he therefore, with his officers and servants, explored all the surrounding caves, bushes, and hollows, in hope of discovering the prince, but all to no purpose: they were, after a long and fruitless search, growing very apprehensive lest some accident had deprived the youth of his life. They still continued their search, however, and at last came upon the prince's horse, which he had left tied to a tree when he approached the lake to quench his thirst. They went up to the horse, and found him tied; this so added to their grief that they were completely overwhelmed, and plunged into the most painful solicitude at not discovering the slightest trace of the young prince. Some of the followers, alarmed at the dreadful agitation evinced by the king, and thinking the prince might have been drowned in the lake, proposed to dive into it and bring up the body. They were perfect adepts in diving, but, notwithstanding all their exertions, not the slightest trace of the lost prince could be found. Long and painful was the suspense in which the now miserable and, as he thought, bereaved father and his followers remained. Various conjectures were formed of the probable mischance which had deprived them of their beloved and only prince, and the king of his heir and successor to the throne, procured by such an amount of prayer and devotion. Some said

that he had been devoured by wild beasts while traversing the forest; others that he had been carried away by the fairies, for his rare beauty and perfection; and others, again, that he had most assuredly been drowned in the lake before them. In the midst of so much confusion and uncertainty as to the fate of the prince, the king, overcome by his affection for his son, began in the most piteous manner to smite his head and breast, and to throw himself on the ground, weeping bitter tears, and lamenting his loss in terms of the most piercing anguish. 'Oh, what a direé calamity is this which has befallen me!' said he; 'he in whom all my hopes were centred is suddenly torn away, and I am left lonely and desolate in the midst of riches and splendour. Alas! how have I deserved such a fate! May not my subjects think that I hated to see my successor during my lifetime, and therefore brought him to this desert to rid myself of him by foul means? And yet, oh, my God! thou knowest the sad and desolate state of my heart!' In this way he continued for some time, and having worked himself up to a state of frenzy by continually dwelling on his lost child, he unsheathed his sword, and meditated putting an end to his miserable existence with his own hand. The minister, observing this movement on the part of the king, fortunately arrived at his side in time to prevent the dreadful purpose, and, in a soothing tone, addressed the king thus:—'My lord and king, what would you do? Consider, I entreat you, the power of the Almighty Being who at your request granted you this son. He can, if He choose, restore him to you again. It is not for us, poor finite beings, the creatures of a day, to arraign the wise decrees of the great Ruler. If, as we have but too great a reason to believe, and which we all equally with yourself deeply lament, your son is by some mystery or unaccountable accident summoned away from this life and all its brief and transitory pleasures, let us hope he is now in a place of happiness. Remember that we have had innumerable instances of every living creature being under the influence of some peculiar fate. As the

loss you now deplore cannot be remedied, and could not possibly have been averted by any human agency, let me entreat you to call your powerful reason to your aid, and console yourself with the blessings that are still left to you.' 'I am fully sensible,' replied the king, 'and thoroughly aware of the truth of what you adduce, and the sincerity with which you put it to me. Your deep sympathy in my sad bereavement is also not unknown to me; but, alas! how can I have offended God to such a degree as to merit so severe a mark of his displeasure? You know not the intensity of my feelings; you cannot in any manner conceive the keenness of my sufferings. They are great—very great! I do not know that I have ever deprived the labourer of his wages, or injured any one by injustice. I have always sought to relieve the distresses of my fellow-creatures, to comfort the afflicted, and to succour the helpless and needy. All this have I done, and more; and yet, oh, my God! I am visited with this greatest of all afflictions—the loss of him I had reckoned upon as the prop of my declining years! It is more than man can bear. I know I must sink under it, for my heart is broken!' His feelings here found vent in a flow of bitter scalding tears. Shortly after, deeming it useless to proceed any further in search of the prince, as they had but too many proofs, as they thought, of his untimely death, they mounted their horses, the king, from sheer weakness, having to be supported on his, and returned to the city. When the queen and the prince's wife were made acquainted with the melancholy news, they were so affected by it that for a while they found a temporary refuge from grief in insensibility. Returning animation only made them feel the more acutely. They in turn set up a most woeful lamentation, beating their breasts and smiting their faces, with every other demonstration of uncontrollable grief, and their cries resounded throughout the palace. The king, after spending some time in sad reflection, called to him an aged slave or nurse, an attendant in the apartments of the queen, and desired her

to bestow every possible care on the princess, the sweet relict of him whom he mourned,—to afford her all the assistance she stood in need of, to calm the violence of her grief, and above all, not to lose sight of her on any account.

"One day the widowed princess, having arrived at the age of puberty, took a bath, and was proceeding through one of the corridors of the palace to an upper apartment, to dry her hair in the rays of the sun, when she overheard an able astrologer, named Dhanoo Patuckh, saying to his son, who dwelt close to her mansion, 'Oh my son! you will confer on me a great favour, and much oblige me, if you will not as usual go to that strange woman, but remain at home and share your bed with your true and lawful wife; for it is predicted, by an auspicious omen in the science of astrology, that if a man have sexual intercourse with his wife at the hour of midnight, and she become pregnant of a son, that this son will become a great and excellent king, and possess many estimable qualities and much energy of purpose.' But the astrologer's son turned a deaf ear to all his father had told him, and continued leading a debauched life. On hearing the advice given by the astrologer to his son, the princess felt much the loss of her husband. Throughout the whole of that day she was ruminating on her sad condition; and, what with grief for the loss of a husband she dearly loved, and the other attendant considerations, she found it impossible to rest that night when she retired to bed. She rose, after in vain trying to sleep, and paced up and down the room, in a state of feverish anxiety for something she could not well define. At last she involuntarily took hold of a vessel filled with water, and having poured some into the palm of her hand, said, 'What bitter cause have I not to curse the author of so much injury to me,—he who was instrumental in killing my husband, or depriving me of him, however that might have been done!' The water deities at this moment made their appearance before the princess, whom they found just as we have described, with the water in her palm and her

countenance expressing execration of the deed the consequences of which she had to deplore. The deities appeared, as we said, before the princess, and one among them addressed her as follows:—'My dear princess! stay, stay awhile, and we will tell you.' She paused involuntarily, and was struck with wonder as she observed the beauty which these deities displayed, and at their sudden and unexpected appearance in the privacy of her apartment at that hour of the night. She however summoned sufficient courage to enquire of them the purport of their visit. 'I suppose,' said she, 'you are in possession of my husband. There has been to-day a favourable prediction revealed to me,—that if I enjoy his person to-night, I shall bear a son who will possess extraordinary merit. Hearing this, I was about to curse those who kept my husband from me or killed him.' The deities said, 'We beg to offer you our services in recovering your husband, if you will promise to send him back to us after the accomplishment of your present desires.' Upon hearing this the princess was much overjoyed, and, without giving the proposition a single thought beyond the hope of speedily recovering him she loved, though he was eventually to be lost to her for ever, replied, 'Here do I give you my faithful promise that as soon as I shall have realised what I have just been telling you, I will return my husband to you. Believe me, I will not forfeit my word, which is as dear to me as anything can well be.' The deities were satisfied, and immediately, by some agency peculiar to themselves, introduced the long-lost prince into the apartment, they themselves disappearing at the same instant. As soon as the princess beheld the prince before her, full of life and health, she rushed into his arms, and he affectionately embraced her; they then retired for the night. At early dawn the deities presented themselves as before in the apartment, and claimed the fulfilment of the promise made by the princess the previous night,—to make over her husband to them, as had been then agreed upon on both sides. She had no alternative but to comply, and she

prepared to make the sacrifice. While engaged in parting with each other, it occurred to the prince that if his wife should become pregnant it would give rise to unpleasant rumours, and attach disgrace to her he loved. 'My ever dear and fair princess,' said he, 'should it be the will of God that you become pregnant after the occurrences of this night, my parents may reasonably become jealous of their honor, and suppose, from my disappearance at this eventful period of your life, that you have played the harlot and proved false to your husband's bed; for which reason, and to prevent unpleasant consequences, take this ring, and in the event of anything of the kind taking place, produce it, and they cannot but then be satisfied that I have been with you since they lost sight of me.' On saying this, after tenderly embracing her, he disappeared with the deities. In the usual course of events, the result of her interview with her husband became apparent: she was found to be pregnant. One of the slaves' suspicion being roused, she ventured to enquire the cause of the visible alteration in her mistress' appearance; but the princess, instead of deigning her a reply, desired her to hold her tongue, and not meddle with affairs which concerned her not. The slave, being displeased at the rebuff she had met with, repaired to the queen's apartment, and disclosed her suspicion to her; the queen was astonished, and not a little grieved besides, to hear this, and she lost no time in visiting the princess, to see her and judge for herself. She there found unmistakeable signs of the actual state of affairs, and became greatly alarmed as the conviction forced itself upon her. She suddenly became enraged, after pondering over the heinousness of the crime which she thought the princess had committed. 'Oh, wicked princess!' said she, 'what is this that I see? Have you reflected well on the disgrace you have brought on yourself and those connected with you, and on the consequences to which it must lead?' Here she was touched with grief as the recollection of her son crossed her mind. 'Oh, my son! you have by some unaccountable

means disappeared from us, and, while we are deploring your loss, see what this wretched wife of yours has done!' The princess, after allowing the queen to vent her feelings, addressed her as follows, in vindication of her conduct:—'Oh, mother! do not think for one moment that I am faithless to my husband, or that I can ever lose sight of what is due to me in my position.' She then explained all the circumstances connected with her present condition, and showed the queen the ring which had been given to her by the prince on the eventful night of his visit, and which she hoped would dispel every unworthy suspicion in this delicate affair. But it was of no weight: the queen examined the ring, and asked the princess why she did not show the prince to her when he appeared. 'I have a great and, as it appears to me, reasonable doubt of the truth of your statement,' said the queen. Returning to her palace, she resolved upon laying the whole case before the king. She was engaged in devising the best mode for doing so, when he, as was usual with him after dismissing his council, presented himself at the door of the queen's apartment, intending to spend half an hour with her in conversation. On entering, he found her in a melancholy mood; he therefore desired to be informed of the cause of her sadness. She then revealed to him the state of the princess, and her belief, which she had no ground for doubting, that the child was the fruit of an illicit amour. At this the king became greatly incensed against the innocent princess, and much grieved when he thought of the consequences attending it. 'What dreadful news is this that I hear?' said he; 'I have scarce got over the wound inflicted by the untimely fate of my dear child, and for whom I daily renew my lamentations, but I must meet with another blow, as if to crush me between them. Was not the death of my son sufficient to bring my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave? Must this fresh affliction be also added to it? The princess has indeed been guilty of a glaring outrage on the honour of our family by her

infidelity; it will prove a lasting shame to me and mine.' He then sent for the princess, and asked her what inducement she had had for committing a crime of the nature that she stood charged with. 'See,' said he, 'to what contempt you have brought the family which has hitherto been untarnished by even the breath of calumny.' The princess, with tears streaming copiously from her eyes, as soon as she could find utterance, modestly replied, 'Oh, my more than father! You feel grieved at my apparent misconduct, for real it is not. Believe me, sir, I am not guilty of violating my husband's bed; I have ever been a faithful wife, and trust to remain so. I beg permission to relate to you a circumstance which occurred in my father's court, which may perhaps dispose you to credit me. At my birth my father had a very eminent astrologer brought to him, with whom he consulted as to my future destiny. In casting my nativity, the astrologer said that I would live happily till my sixteenth year (which you know I have just entered), and that then I would fall under the worst of all suspicions, unjustly though it would be, which would give me much pain, but that ultimately I should become possessed of the means of exculpating myself to the satisfaction of all. This suspicion has now fallen upon me: it only remains for me to prove its injustice, to do which I have not now the means, save this ring,' and she produced the one given to her by her husband on the night of his remaining with her, 'which was placed on my finger by my husband himself, in proof of the innocence of his wife as to anything that might be said regarding the condition in which I now am. I say this, sir, to you, in the hope that you will do me the justice to believe that I am not what I appear to be. In either case, however, I must abide by your decision.' The king replied that he did not believe a word of what she had said. 'It is ever so,' said he; 'when people commit a fault they try to screen themselves by falsehood, to which they attempt to give the semblance of truth. Nothing that you have said

can exculpate you. I should this moment have sacrificed you, but consideration for the innocent fruit of your base crime withheld me. Go, then, from my presence, and with tears of repentance wash out the foul stain you have cast on the hitherto untarnished name of Bhudrasain!' The king ordered his minister to see her taken to some deserted and lonely part of the forest, and there left to shift for herself. On this the princess again addressed the king in moving terms, and appealed directly to his heart as to a father. 'I am, sir,' said she, 'though shrouded in mystery as to my present condition, still an honest and virtuous woman; and my misfortune, not my crime, has brought me to this pass,—to fall under your well-meant but unjust displeasure. I submit to it; but remember,—oh, remember!—if I should afterwards appear innocent in your eyes, what will be the feelings that will then agitate the heart of one so good as you are? Think of that, sir, if you cannot be induced to have any consideration for me.' The king turned a deaf ear to all her entreaties, fully believing in her perfidy. The minister, according to the orders he had received, prepared a mare for her conveyance, and a horse for himself. When all was ready, he informed the princess, telling her to make haste, and that he would take her to her father's city, where she would doubtless find sufficient opportunity for assuaging her grief. Before she left the palace of her husband's father, she again protested in respectful terms against the violence that was being offered to her; she reiterated that she was virtuous, and that on that account God would not forsake her. She then kissed the feet of her husband's parents, nothing else being vouchsafed to her, and set out with the minister. At daybreak they found they had penetrated into a wood, and the princess becoming exceedingly thirsty and fatigued, was unable to prosecute her journey. She requested the minister to procure some water for her use; he accordingly went in search of it. Having reached a rivulet, and the heat becoming oppressive, she alighted from her mare, and

sought shelter under the branches of a wide-spreading tree. There was a stream also hard by, and, having quenched her thirst, she seated herself on the ground, where, lulled by the fresh breeze which gently blew across her face, she soon fell asleep. The minister, seizing the opportunity thus presented to him, mounted his horse and flew towards the city of Bhadravutty, where, on his arrival, he informed the king that he had executed his orders. When the princess awoke, she was astonished to find that the minister had disappeared, and left her alone in that lonely place. She got up and looked everywhere for him, but to no purpose. She became greatly apprehensive, and said, 'If I had not slept the minister would not have abandoned me, and left me alone.' At last, seeing no help for the existing state of affairs, she resigned herself to the will of God, calling upon Him and entreating Him to have compassion on her forlorn state. She then left her mare, and commenced her travels on foot. In her walk she observed a steep and rugged mountain, which she was compelled to pass, as it lay in her way; at first she hesitated, but seeing no alternative she put up a prayer to the Supreme Being, and began to make the perilous ascent. Though the stony path she trod was ill calculated to raise her heart, she yet with patient endurance dragged her weary frame along, at every step the sharp stones wounding her tender feet, which were now profusely bleeding. At last, being exhausted, she stopped to draw breath, and as she cast her eyes upwards she despaired of ever being able to gain the summit. She went on, however, and, by dint of unusual exertion and persevering energy, gained the top of the mountain. She there sat down and refreshed herself for a short time, and while so engaged she reflected on the lot she was doomed to endure, and the condition she was now reduced to. From a princess, seated in her palace, with everything at her command, she was now become a poor wandering outcast, with neither friends nor home; and, worse than all, at the mercy of every wayfarer. She wept

bitter tears of grief as she thus reflected on her situation. After a short stay she continued her journey. The mountain on the opposite side consisted of several extensive cultivated fields. As she descended into the valley below, she observed before her, in a large plain, a city, with a great lake, on perceiving which she became delighted with the prospect of so soon approaching human habitations. Though she was nearly exhausted by her journey, she made towards this city. It was called Shewpoory, and the king's name was Shrimunt. She came near a tank outside the fort, where the women of the city were engaged in drawing water. She approached them, and seated herself on one of the ledges of the rocks. Some few of the women from the city were also seated there, and observing the miserable plight of the new comer, whose feet were quite lacerated by the stones over which she had travelled, and her noble air and carriage, surrounded her and began earnestly to question her. They asked her where she had come from, and what had brought her there. Some even said that they suspected, from her appearance and dress, that she was a person of exalted rank, and that they were surprised to find her in that plight. The unfortunate princess replied to all this, that what was written in her fate she must go through. 'I am a stranger,' continued she, 'and have none to depend upon but God. I will live in any condition He may be pleased to allot to me, because I am his creature.' Some slaves of a famous actress in the city were also at the well, and accosted the princess. They wished to know, like the others, where the princess had come from, and how she contemplated earning a living for herself,—whether she had any one with her, or whether she was alone. She replied, 'I have no other companion but God, who created me, and I am certain He will provide for me too.' The slaves on their return home told their mistress of the arrival of a person in the city, of great beauty and attraction, but, withal, suffering from her recent travels, and without any ostensible means of support. Of her beauty they spoke in no measured terms; and sure

enough the object of their vulgar admiration was deserving of any amount of praise. On hearing the tale, the actress immediately repaired to the well, and there found the princess seated in the same place, beautiful as Hebe, and as humble in her demeanour as a slave. The actress inquired into the condition of the wandering princess, and as to how she intended disposing of herself. Finding that she had no visible means of support, nor a home to receive her, the wily actress offered to admit her into her house, where she would, she said, find every necessary comfort. The unfortunate princess wished to know, before she proceeded with the actress, what services would be required of her in return for the asylum offered. 'Dancing, singing, and the enjoyment which wealth and charms will most assuredly secure for you,' said the actress. The princess felt hurt at this giddy and unfeeling talk, and replied that she could not think of accepting the proffered kindness on the terms proposed; 'but,' said she, 'I will be content to serve you if you will give me for my trouble a quantity of undressed corn sufficient to live upon. I must stipulate, however, that the services I render to you shall be other than those you propose. You must teach me to grind and pound corn, and the other domestic arts involved in housekeeping. If you promise me this I will follow you.' The actress, not wishing to enter into an argument there, as both the time and place were unsuited to the purpose, agreed to the conditions of the handsome traveller, thinking she would easily bring her round to her own purposes after she had tasted the comforts of her home, and otherwise experienced her bounty and kindness. The princess accordingly accepted the offer, especially as her condition rendered it imperative that she should remain in some asylum, at least until after her confinement, after which she purposed devising some plan for her future guidance. They accordingly proceeded together to the residence of the actress. The princess, however, notwithstanding the importunities of the actress, could not be persuaded to enter into any of the

projects set before her for becoming rich and admired. She continued performing the menial offices of the household, which she contrived to master shortly after she had been admitted into the house, and for which she received in payment the undressed corn that had been agreed upon, which she cooked in a separate shed in the yard, and partook of in all humility. Thus lived this lovely princess, once the admiration of all, and almost supreme in power, in the household of this worthless creature, who had neither name, character, or reputation. That critical period in the life of a young woman—the birth of her first-born—was now fast approaching, and the actress made every preparation for the occasion. In this she was actuated more by certain designs she had in view than by any motives of humanity. She had a midwife ready at hand for the emergency that was now momentarily expected. But we must here relate the arrangements that had been entered into by the actress with this personage: she told the midwife that it was her desire that the princess should be delivered of a daughter, but that should it prove otherwise, she calculated upon the discretion and inventive powers of the matron to devise means for substituting a girl in place of the boy, who must on all accounts be removed. At the same time she informed the midwife that the queen of that city was also far advanced in pregnancy, and might not unreasonably be expected to complete her time about the same period as the inmate of her house. She threw out this hint, and left the midwife to follow up the suggestion, who did not hesitate to enter into the transaction with all the zeal and willingness which the generality of her class not unfrequently display in cases of this nature, however revolting to a conscientious mind, when backed by the powerful and irresistible argument of gold, of which the actress in this instance was very profuse and liberal. She gave her a large purse for present use, as she said, and with a promise of doubling or even trebling it in the event of her success. The object the actress had in view in this transaction we must

allow to be developed in its own time in the course of the narrative.

"The king of that city was very virtuous and exceedingly rich. He had seven children, all daughters, who were very handsome in their way; and the only thing that grieved him was the want of a male child on whom to bestow the weight of the crown he had worn for a series of years with credit and honor. Every time his wife, the queen, became pregnant, he was buoyed up with hope, and as often had he been disappointed. In the present case his feelings took another turn: he was enraged to think that he should be thus baulked in his expectations, and he swore that if the queen did not present him with a son, he would discard her as unworthy to share in the honors of his exalted rank and position. This cruel mandate threw the queen into great dejection, and she was heard to say, 'I do not know what fate may have reserved for me, but should it be the will of God again to give me a female child, I must strive to replace the child with a boy.' She was, however, at a loss how to effect this desirable but unnatural end. In this dilemma she thought of consulting the midwife who usually attended upon her, and who happened to be the same whose services had been engaged by the actress. She sent for this trafficker in children, and disclosed to her what so heavily weighed on her mind. She said that the midwife would confer a great obligation on her by attending to her request, and exhorted her to render her assistance without the least apprehension in a matter of so great moment. 'The king, my lord and husband,' said the disconsolate queen, 'has expressly told me that if in this my eighth confinement I do not present him with a son, he will abandon me, and never more see me, on which account I am much troubled in mind, not knowing what will be the issue. I therefore beg you will, soon after my delivery, in case I shall have given birth to a female child, exchange it for a male one, which you must procure in its stead. I hope you will not refuse to do me this invaluable piece of service; you are well fitted

to undertake the task, and I will, rest assured, handsomely reward you for the same.' This gave much pleasure to the midwife, as it promised to assist her in the work she had already undertaken, as well as add considerably to the profit; and, what was more, it would effectually silence all suspicions, and close the door against any conjecture that might ever arise; of which, however, as the two cases at present stood, there was not the slightest probability. She did not therefore hesitate to promise her strict attention to the queen's proposition, and her unqualified aid in carrying it out; and went home in high glee, and with a well-filled purse, ruminating on the good luck that had attended her. From this day she became very regular in her attendance on both the queen and the princess, anxiously awaiting the time of delivery of each, which, by her observation and experience, she knew could not be far distant in either case. While thus engaged, the queen sent for her, requiring her immediate attendance, being taken suddenly ill. Prior to this, however, the cunning woman had established two of her own tried creatures in attendance upon these two pregnant women,—the queen and the inmate of the actress' house,—as she knew that without such aid she could ill perform the project she had in hand, though in the one case, that of the queen, it was with her full consent and cognisance. The midwife lost no time in attending upon the queen, and at an early hour on the following morning she had the pleasure of witnessing, though to the no small grief of the queen, the birth of as handsome a princess as she could have wished to see. Not long after this occurrence she was sent for by the actress, as the princess was also taken ill about the same time, and was delivered of a beautiful prince. As may well be imagined, the midwife lost no time, aided by the darkness of the night, speedily to effect her purpose; and as the day dawned upon the inmates of either house, the exchange had been made, and the infants laid beside the mothers who had not given them birth, but who were in future to be considered and acknow-

ledged by the world as having done so. The queen was transported with joy at the successful termination of an affair fraught with such fearful consequences to her but for the timely aid rendered by the midwife; and the only drawback to her otherwise happy condition was, that she was necessarily in the hands of her accomplices, who could by a single word blast her fame and reputation, and, possibly, take away her life also. However, she consoled herself with the hope that money would purchase their silence. The exchange was so cleverly accomplished that but four individuals, who were one and all necessarily involved in it, were cognisant of it,—the queen, the actress, the midwife, and her confidante. With the queen it was as we have above related; not so, however, with the princess in her lonely dwelling. Unsuspicious as yet of all around, and fully expecting, according to the prediction she had overheard, to give birth to a son, she was grievously disappointed to find that it was not so, and expressed herself to that effect to those who were near her. 'I had received an assurance,' said she, 'from Dhanoo, the astrologer, that I should bear a son; and it is indeed a matter of surprise to me, that it should turn out otherwise.' The positive manner in which she spoke totally upset the equanimity of the actress and her accomplice the midwife: their blundering and foolish explanations roused suspicion in the princess' mind that some foul play had been practised upon her during the hours of insensibility into which she had been plunged at the moment of delivery. 'However,' said she, 'though I feel perfectly assured that the astrologer could not have predicted falsely, and though the care and anxiety with which I had looked forward to a consummation of my desires have been thus cruelly disregarded by some unfriendly hands, who have, perhaps, removed from me my son, yet will I hope that that son will be happy, and live prosperously; that the Almighty will, if it pleases Him, bring us together; or if He should in his wisdom ordain otherwise, his will be done! Into whomsoever's hand my

child may have fallen, may the same care be bestowed on him as I will bestow on this involuntary intruder.' Saying this, she took up the infant lying beside her in her arms, and kissed her, naming her Soomutty.

CHAPTER VI.

Veytal concludes his narration, and disappears.

"WHEN the king heard the joyful intelligence of a son being born to him, he ordered it to be proclaimed, not only throughout the court and its environs, but all over the country. He also ordered that a distribution of sugar-candy should be made to his subjects, a variety of alms given to the poor and indigent, and splendid and gorgeous presents to his officers. On the thirteenth day after the birth of the prince, he gave him the name of Bulsain; and when he had arrived at a proper age he caused him to be educated and instructed in all the useful sciences and every other requisition for a prince, thus enabling him to uphold the dignity of his elevated rank, and to work his way safely through the trammels of court intrigue and court observances. At the age of twelve years, he became so completely qualified to reign, that his father abdicated the throne in his favour, and his elevation was received with unanimous acclamation. Shortly after this occurrence, the aged monarch, finding that the infirmities of age and their attendant inconveniences were fast creeping upon him, took an affectionate leave of his son, and directed his steps towards a place dedicated to religion, in order to devote his remaining years to works of piety and charity. Previous to the abdication of his throne, and divesting himself of the trammels of royalty, he left plain and positive injunctions with his prime minister, diligently and impartially to discharge the onerous and important duties over which he was now called upon to exercise his care and experience. The prince only nominally held the reins of government. The affairs of state during the regency devolved upon the minister, who displayed such surprising talent and skill on

all subjects, as effectually, within a short time, to win the affection and esteem of every class. The young and accomplished prince, meanwhile, passed his days in prosperity, content, and happiness. As in the days of the old monarchs, the actress who has figured in these pages was a frequent visitor at court, where, by her talent in singing, she established a sort of influence over the young king, who bestowed on her the highest encomiums. One day, the actress presented herself at court with the princess, whom she kept at a distance watching her shoes, which she left behind at the outer door. The prince, seeing the lovely being before him, (who was no other than his own mother, as our readers will recollect,) was, as it were, struck by her charms, and took a great interest in her. He was desirous of obtaining some knowledge of her, and with that view addressed himself to the actress. The prince was very minute in his inquiries, as may be imagined, regarding one who had in so forcible a manner gained his affections at first sight, and whose beauty was beyond description. The wicked actress said she belonged to her, and with an atrocity unknown in the most barbarous ages, proposed that if his majesty selected her for his choice, she would answer for the slave's (as she was pleased to call her) submission. 'Your majesty,' continued the actress, 'need only come to my dwelling to have your wishes fulfilled in this respect.' The prince having signified to her his intention of paying her a visit at the first opportunity, the actress left the palace, and retired to her lodgings, where she strove by every artifice to make the unfortunate woman in her power receive the youthful king with favor. After making known the intention of the king, she proceeded as follows:—'I would advise you to be ready, neatly attired, and receive him with all due respect; and I doubt not you will in the end find it to your advantage.' 'I do not and cannot possibly feel any pleasure in the expected visit,' said the now humble princess,—really a princess still, which title she cannot be said by any means to have forfeited as yet,—'nor do I feel

the least sentiment of regard for the king, from the representations you have made to me of him. I am contented to remain in my present condition; and, having passed all the time I have been in this country in your service, I hope you will not give me the pain of speaking ill of you, which your present conduct, in insulting me by such impious and wicked proposals, will lead me to. There is, permit me to say, great and daring impiety in proposing to me what you do; and you will pardon me if I refuse to hear anything more you can advance on such an odious subject, which can only have the painful effect of renewing my griefs.' For a time the actress was silenced; having, however, made everything ready for the occasion of the king's reception, she returned to the attack. 'If you will not,' said she, 'cheerfully and at once comply with my instructions, I will *compel* you to accept the king's proposals, as he has declared that you are the choice and object of his desires, and he is not likely to consent to be thwarted in them.' The unfortunate victim of this ruthless persecution in vain tried to dissuade the actress from her vile purpose. At last, finding it of no avail to argue with her on the enormity of the crime she meditated, she resolved to let things take their course, fully determined never on any account to prostitute her person. She even thought of endeavouring to excite the king's compassion by appealing to his generosity, and by representing to him that a son whom she mourned was of the same age as himself, which she thought might induce him to look upon her in the light of a mother. As this idea crossed her mind, she felt a yearning of the heart towards this youthful king, such as mothers alone can feel; and a faint whisper within her told her that it might be—that it *was* her long-lost son! The age, the mien, and the resemblance to her husband, all tended to confirm her suspicions. 'I will, at all events, relate the circumstance to him,' thought she, 'and thus see if he is worthy of such a noble father and so chaste a mother.' This idea made her, instead of wishing him away, long for his arrival. She accordingly went up

to her calculating mistress, as we must no doubt call her, and expressed her willingness to receive the king. The actress became quite enraptured at the turn affairs had taken, and lavished her praise profusely on the princess, who was now little better than—in fact *was*, her slave.

"The king spent the day, as usual, in the affairs of his state, and at night he set out with a choice retinue for the house of the actress, picturing to himself how much he would enjoy the society and person of the dazzling object of his sudden affection. He had not, however, gone many steps, when he heard the unwelcome chirping of the bird Pingla, which boded disappointment. That was a superstitious time, and the king himself was not exempt from a belief in such omens. He was therefore much annoyed at this opposition, and, instead of proceeding onwards, returned to the palace to consult his astrologers. He called one of the best among them, and acquainted him with the private mission on which he had been bent, and the sign he had received. The astrologer's reply was to the effect that in a person of his rank and position so flagrant an act of injustice and crime as he contemplated would not be permitted. The king, on hearing this, put off the visit until the following night, and retired to rest in great dudgeon.

"The actress in the mean while had prepared everything, fully expecting that the king would honor her with a visit that night, but she was doomed to be disappointed. She kept looking out of the windows of her dwelling continually, and thus remained until the night was far advanced, when, finding that there was no longer any likelihood of the king's appearance, she thought he had perhaps only declared his intention with a view to make fun of her, at which she was greatly grieved. She at length retired for the night, not to sleep, however, for she was too much agitated in her mind, but to devise means to bring about her wishes. As soon as the morning dawned she was up and dressed, ready to proceed to the palace, to ascertain if possible the cause of the disappointment she had experienced the previous night. On

appearing before the king, and after the usual ceremonials, she ventured to touch upon the subject. The king affected much sorrow at having disappointed her, but said it was owing solely to the pressure of business involved in his kingly office,—that he would allow nothing to impede him that night, and that she might therefore fully expect him. She left the palace, quite satisfied with the explanation that had been vouchsafed to her, in the strongest hope of seeing the king in her house that night, and of gaining his countenance and friendship, which was essential, she thought, to her future aggrandisement. At night the king, with an increased flow of spirits, directed his steps, with the same select retinue that had attended him the previous night, to the abode of the wily actress, but, to his great astonishment and utter dismay, he met with the same obstruction to his advance as on the former occasion. He therefore had to go back to the palace again, and defer the realisation of his wishes until another and more propitious occasion.

"The actress, as before, awaited the coming of the king in anxious expectation. She re-arranged her rooms, and prepared everything for his reception, but again was she disappointed. She was outrageously angry at this second trick played upon her, as she thought, and was more restless than ever that night. However, as it was a mighty king she had to do with, she thought it would be neither wise nor discreet in her to vent her rage, or even by any means to let the king perceive it; so she dressed herself as usual, bestowing more than ordinary care on her toilette, and, putting on one of her deceptive guises, though all was a turbulent chaos within, proceeded to the court. When she was ushered into the private apartment of the king, where she invariably obtained an audience, she thus addressed him, 'Your majesty is well aware that your subjects generally are not addicted to uttering falsehoods; but if the king, who is considered to be just in all his dealings, commits this offence, no one dare interrogate him as to its justice or otherwise, even if it could be possibly justifiable,

which I am far from thinking it can be. The public credit, however, will be lost, whatever semblance of it may be preserved in the presence of power and authority.' The king was in a good humour, and she took advantage of it. He smiled at her freedom of speech, and in the most complacent manner replied, 'Do not be vexed; compose yourself and go home. I will positively be with you this night.' The actress retired, and as evening drew on, the king again, after the labours of the day, bent his steps towards the actress' house. On his way his mind was occupied with nothing but the pleasurable moments he should enjoy with the handsome creature he was about to visit, whom he never for a moment suspected to be his mother. As he was thus wending his way, regardless of all external objects, he trod accidentally on the tail of a calf that was lying in his way, who, on being hurt, set up a roaring noise. The mother, who was hard by, was alarmed at the cry, and said fiercely, in articulate sounds, 'Silence, my child! the hurt you have now received proceeds from the indifference produced by the intoxicating passion of lust. The king, with blind fatality, and overcome by an inhuman passion, is thus rushing on his own destruction: he is now going to meet *his own mother*, with unworthy and criminal intentions! Is it to be wondered at, then, that he should in this mad adventure be regardless of those he may injure in his wild precipitancy?' The king trembled like an aspen on hearing these words proceed from a dumb animal. He pondered long on their import. 'During the last two days,' thought he 'I found the bird Pingla obstructing my way with its discordant chirpings, and to-day has happened what is in itself a miracle—a dumb animal speaking! Surely there must be some mystery involved in all this!' He for a moment suspended, by an herculean effort, all the workings of his passionate heart, and was gradually led into thinking in the light of a mother of the woman he was going to meet, as the cow had in a most convincing manner pronounced her to be. He was deter-

mined now, more than ever, to go and see her, and inquire into her history; so he kept on his course until he arrived at the house of the actress, who was in readiness to receive him, and to conduct him to the room which had been prepared expressly for his majesty. The princess, or, to be more exact, the king's mother, from a conscious rectitude of purpose, and from the previous argument she had entered into with herself, neither dreaded the actress nor yet the approaching meeting. She waited in an apartment ready to receive the king, seated on a couch of downy softness, and had her room-door bolted to prevent unauthorised intrusion. As soon as the king entered the house, which displayed all the riches of the actress, he was received with every demonstration of joy and respect due to him; but, as may well be supposed, the serious turn the king's mind had taken prevented his bestowing anything like the approbation the actress had been led to expect from his previous conduct. He merely said to her, in rather a stern voice, 'Where is your beautiful and interesting attendant?' upon which she ushered him into the interior of the house, and to the door of the princess' apartment, which they found fastened. The prince, then, without a moment's hesitation, cried out, 'Oh, mother—my dear and accomplished mother!—open the door; I am impatient to know and to speak to you, and have come to ascertain your history. I assure you I have not come, as you have been led to suppose, with any unworthy intentions.' At these words, so contrary to what she had expected, the actress was much surprised, and a trembling suddenly came upon her, but she dared not give way to her feelings in the presence of the king. The princess, or attendant, as she was commonly called, now giving thanks to God for the change in her position, and for the proof, as it were, of the prediction of the astrologer, rose from her seat and instantly opened the door to admit her son,—for that the king was her son she was now thoroughly convinced.

'The king, on entering, with great respect in his manner

seated himself beside the handsome attendant, and thus began: 'Be so kind as to relate to me your history—who you are, and your reasons for lodging in the house of this disreputable person. Are you a princess? Tell me, I beseech you!' She sighed, and for a time was bathed in tears. When she had regained her speech, she addressed the king as follows:—'Oh, king! I will now lay my unfortunate case before you. I am the daughter of a certain king, and married the Prince Soorsain, son of King Bhudrasain, of the city of Bhadravutty. My husband one day, being engaged in the pleasure of the chase in an adjoining wood, became thirsty, and went to a certain lake in order to quench his thirst: while engaged in drawing the water with his hands, the water deities took hold of him by the hand and carried him to their abode, and he is now with them. While deploring the loss of my husband, I happened to overhear a prediction by the famous astrologer Dhanoo, whereupon I was on the point of cursing those who withheld my husband from me, or who had slain him, not knowing at the time his exact fate, or what had become of him. On this the deities suddenly made their appearance in my apartment, and desired me to stop my malediction, saying they would restore my husband to me for that night, under the strict injunction, in support of which they extracted an oath from me, that I should send him back to them the next morning. In the morning they appeared and took him away in their train.' She then related the particulars of the treatment she had received from her father-in-law, how she came into that city and became an attendant on the actress, together with every subsequent occurrence. Comparing this tale with what he had heard from the cow on his way, the king was fully convinced that the person before him was no other than his mother. He became so affected at this that he mingled his tears with those shed by the unfortunate princess. The king turned to the actress, who was present all the time, and who stood as one rooted to the spot, and inquired, 'Do you know

where I was born?' She started, turned pale, and in an incoherent manner replied, 'I know your ma—a—jes—ty was born in the fa—mi—ly of the king whose crown you now wear.' The king threatened that if she did not speak the truth he would punish her in the way which he should deem most advisable. She exhibited the utmost trepidation at these words, and replied, 'Your majesty wishes to know the truth;—indeed I am acquainted with nothing more than what I have already said on the subject; but the midwife who attended at your majesty's birth will doubtless be able to supply you with further particulars.' The king immediately sent for the midwife, and questioned her. 'Tell me,' said he, 'as you value your life, where was I born? If you prevaricate, or tell any untruths, I will cut off your nose and ears! Consider then well what you are about to say.' The midwife, from her first entrance into the presence of the young sovereign, trembled violently, and the perspiration oozed out from every pore of her body to such an extent as well nigh to render it impossible for her to stand from sheer weakness. For a time she could not find utterance; but when at length sufficiently recovered, she said, 'I will obey your majesty's commands, by relating the whole truth; but you must deign to pass your royal word that no evil shall befal me if in the course of the relation I should confess myself to have been guilty of gross misconduct.' The king, in his anxiety to get at the truth, gave the promise. The midwife then related the whole of the transaction regarding the exchange of the children which we have already recorded. Having done so, she prostrated herself before the now enraged monarch, and notwithstanding the promise of pardon that had been extended to her, besought him for the love of heaven to forgive the part she had taken in the dishonest act, being induced thereto, she said, by the earnest entreaty of the queen. She implored his clemency, not only for herself, but for all concerned in the nefarious business. The princess, who had been all the time an attentive listener to the tale that had been unfolded

by the midwife, now burst into tears, her supposed daughter joining her, and the king himself was so moved as to catch the infection. The young king and his mother could not but trace the hand of Providence throughout the mazes of the painful story thus unfolded before them, and they blessed and thanked the Almighty for his goodness in enabling them to elicit the truth. The princess, giving way to her feelings, affectionately embraced the king, and kissed him a thousand times, her demonstrations of affection being as tenderly returned; and though they were both bathed in torrents of tears, yet were they tears of joy. After a short stay in the house, which was spent in mutual inquiries and explanations, and in the interchange of those expressions of solicitude and love, the full depth of which those similarly placed can alone be said to understand, the king ordered his state palanquins to be brought for his mother and the young princess who had so long supplied the place of a child to her. When the princess, after years of misery and privation, found herself with her son and helpmate, if we may so call her adopted child, in the palace together, her joy became boundless; words cannot do justice to that which every look, every movement, and every attitude displayed. She was happy—supremely happy!—the only thing that helped, perhaps, to cast a cloud on the sunshine that now shone over all, was the absence of her dear lord and husband; and even in such moments she might be said to find consolation, for she knew that he was well in health, and in perfect safety.

"Next morning, the king called his minister, and without at all acquainting him with his intentions, directed him to assume the reins of government during an absence which he contemplated. He said he trusted to his integrity and ability, for which he was deservedly famed. In all his decisions he directed him to be guided by the strictest impartiality, equity, and justice. He was going, he said, to settle an important affair, which would take at least a month. He also ordered that whatever preparations might

be necessary for the journey should be made as speedily as possible. When all was ready, he, with his mother and sister, (for so we shall call them for brevity's sake,) and a small retinue, set out for the plain where his father Soorsain had been taken away by the water deities. When he came to the lake he gave directions for encamping there, and his pavilion and the tents of the retinue were immediately pitched on the banks; after which the king called together a number of hermits, brahmins, and other devout persons, to whom, when they had all assembled, he stated the whole case, requesting at the same time their advice as to how he was to get his father Soorsain back from the abode of the water fairies. The brahmins proposed that certain offerings should be made to fire, close to the lake, for which purpose they caused a pit to be dug to hold the sacred embers. They then entered upon a profound meditation, each person being engaged in performing the respective part allotted to him. This lasted for nine days. In order to propitiate the deities, at the close of the sacrifice they set apart certain pure trees and clarified butter, which they burnt in the sacrificial fire; but the deities not appearing particularly favorable to Prince Bulsain, he took a knife in his hand, and, after calling upon God, began to slice the flesh off his arms, and to cast it into the burning flames. The deities still seeming indifferent to his prayers, in a most humble manner, and after deep meditation, he appealed to the Almighty, and raised his hand to sever his head from his body; but lo! the deities instantly appeared in the sky, saying, 'Oh, prince! ask what you will; we can refuse you nothing, for we are pleased with your generous exploit.' The prince answered them, 'If you are pleased with me, give me King Soorsain, my honored father!' They immediately disappeared and released Soorsain, who coming suddenly from the lake, first embraced Bulsain, his son, and then prostrated himself at the feet of the pious men there assembled. The princess now suddenly emerged from among her attendants and waiting-women, and, after

embracing her husband, prostrated herself at his feet. The rejoicings at their reunion were universal.

"After the sensation created by this event had somewhat subsided, King Bulsain, with unexampled liberality, rewarded the devout persons there assembled with grants in land and money; and, having been sumptuously regaled, they set out to their respective abodes, after having bestowed their prayers and benedictions on the kingly donor. Shortly after, King Bulsain ordered the tents to be struck, and preparations made to commence their journey homeward. They began their march with every sign of joy, and with great military display. When they approached the city of Shewpoory, the minister, who had received notice of the advance of his royal master, went with the principal nobles of the court to receive him; and they entered the city amid loud shouts of welcome. Prince Soorsain, owing to the anxiety he had undergone, appeared but as the shadow of his former self, so that it can scarcely be wondered at that he showed the effects of it in his personal appearance. On this account it was resolved that, until he should have perfectly recovered his health and strength, he should take up his residence with his son, King Bulsain.

"Some few months after, Prince Soorsain prepared to return to the city of Bhadravutty, having made his son acquainted with his intention. The latter immediately ordered preparations to be made on an extensive scale; and, when all was in readiness, Prince Soorsain set out with his wife and son. When they drew nigh to the capital, the officers of King Bhudrasain's court became alarmed, and in great terror informed the king that King Bulsain's army was approaching, apparently with hostile intent. 'Knowing,' said they, 'that your majesty is not at the present time possessed of a sufficient force to repel the invaders, and that Prince Soorsain is deceased, King Bulsain has taken advantage of it. Now, we would advise your majesty to collect, with as little delay as possible, as many of your subjects as you can, in order to meet this formidable army.'

King Bhudrasain was astounded at the announcement of an invading army being in the outskirts of the town, and he knew from experience that no hastily-concerted measures could be of any use in repelling the attacks of a strong and disciplined foe. However, the minister had in the mean time collected a large number of men, and, with some few of the regular troops to back them, he determined to proceed, as he said, to meet the invading force, and ascertain the cause of their wanton aggression. He therefore appeared before the king, prostrated himself at the foot of the throne, and obtained the royal authority to go on his mission.

" Prince Bulsain observing the army of his grandsire approaching in warlike array towards him, was convinced that the formidable appearance his men presented was the cause of some alarm in the country. He therefore directed a letter to be written, containing full particulars, and despatched it by a trusty messenger, praying that his majesty would recal his army, and be graciously pleased to favor his son Soorsain and his grandson Bulsain with an interview. The messenger to whom this letter was entrusted gallopped away in advance, and came up to King Bhudrasain's minister, who was on his way with his force to meet the supposed enemy. The messenger desired to be presented without delay to the king his master, as he had a letter of great importance to deliver to him personally ; he also communicated to the minister verbally what the presence of the great army outside meant. The minister of Bhudrasain was overjoyed, and he lost no time in directing an officer to conduct the bearer of the letter into the presence of the king, telling him not to lose a word of what his majesty might say. The officer and the messenger then proceeded together, and, after having traversed the city, they arrived at the magnificent palace of King Bhudrasain. He was seated in the council chamber, deeply engaged in discussing with his courtiers the reason of the sudden appearance of so formidable a force as he had been informed of. The messenger was immediately ushered into the king's

presence, and received with due respect. He presented the letter from King Bulsain, which King Bhudrasain proceeded carefully to read. When he came to the concluding part, where his son's wife's sufferings were briefly related, he shed tears of repentance; nevertheless, he rejoiced that no serious injury had befallen her. He forgot all past grief in his present joy; so, rising with a radiant face, his eyes beaming with pleasure, he proceeded into the apartment of the queen, his wife,—who had barely got over the double grief, if we may so say, of the loss of her dear and only son and the perfidy of his wife,—and acquainted her with the joyful intelligence that had reached him. She was so much affected with the alternation from extreme sorrow to equal joy, that for a time she seemed stupified; at last she collected her scattered thoughts, and was, in some degree capable of appreciating the extent of her new-found happiness. The king, after communicating the intelligence to the queen, proceeded to meet his long-lost and providentially-restored offspring. On his approach, King Bulsain, his grandson, alighted to pay his devoirs to his grandsire, and they embraced each other affectionately. Then Prince Soorsain approached his father, and prostrated himself at the feet of the aged Bhudrasain. This was indeed a moment of the most exquisite pleasure to Bhudrasain;—to have for his offspring two of the handsomest and most accomplished princes that could be found in those days, caused him to weep with extacy. They then mounted their horses and returned to the city, where they were received with acclamation by the populace. The king led his children to the palace, together with the princess his daughter-in-law and her adopted child, whose age, it will be remembered, corresponded with that of King Bulsain. The queen, now quite recovered from the sudden indisposition caused by the unexpected arrival of her children, made her appearance also among them, and might be seen, equally with the king, engaged in the mutual exchange of kind offices. Her daughter-in-law prostrated herself at her feet, and looked

up to her as if calling on her to recal those terms of opprobrium she had cast upon this innocent victim of circumstantial evidence. 'My dear and affectionate child,' said the aged queen, 'I am sorry for what I in my passion, and under the fullest impression of your infidelity, launched on your innocent head. I am fully sensible of the wrong I have done you, but let me hope that my future conduct towards you will in some degree atone for it.' 'Ah!' said the princess, 'do not say so; all that befals us is decreed by an unerring Providence. Had you not caused me to be expelled the palace, I might probably have never been enabled to find means for the recovery of my lost husband: it is to you that I am indebted for this happiness. Say not, then, that you have wronged me. The happiness of this moment more than atones for any amount of privation I may have been put to, and the latter has been but very slight indeed, comparatively.' The king and queen were highly pleased at this disposition on the part of the injured princess to forget the past: if it were possible, it raised her in their estimation in an unparalleled degree, and they embraced her, with contrition and tears of joy streaming down their furrowed cheeks. It was too great a happiness for them to regain their son, whom they had never expected to see again in this life, and at the same time to find his wife, whom it was now evident they had unjustly expelled the palace, placed beyond suspicion, with a fine young king the fruit of their union. King Bhudrasain, after this, ordered a banquet to be prepared in honour of the great event we have recorded,—the meeting together of this dispersed family,—and it was kept up with all the splendour of royalty. In a short time he also caused his son, Prince Soorsain, to be crowned in his stead, and invested with the royal dignity.

"The youthful Bulsain, during this visit, became smitten with the charms of a neighbouring princess, and was soon after married. After some weeks spent in conviviality, he took leave of his father and grandsire, and

returned to his own territory, loaded with presents and proofs of the estimation in which he was held by all. There, surrounded by everything that could render a monarch happy, and in the enjoyment of the blessings of peace, he continued to reign for a series of years, until he had run the course allotted to him here below."

The parrot, having finished the tale, leaped into an opening in the wall and disappeared, followed by the wondering gaze of all those assembled in the room, who had been, as may well be supposed, attentive listeners to the whole story.

We must now refresh the memory of our readers, and ask them to go back with us to where we left King Vickramadetea, in the guise of a brahmin, with the Princess Pudmavuntty. King Vickramadetea, it will be remembered, was engaged in negociating for the hand of Pudmavuntty on behalf of Prince Duntsain, and had in some degree succeeded. It only remained for him to get over the condition attached by the princess of her acquiescence with his project, which was to make her laugh and speak four different times successively; and it was to effect this that Vickramadetea had called in the aid of the spirit Veytal, who, under the assumed form of a parrot, entered upon the tale just related. They were yet engaged in praising the parrot, who had helped them to wile away the heavy hours of night with his interesting story, and wondering at the unlooked-for depth of understanding and grasp of thought (if we may so say) displayed by this tiny creature, when a Shaloonky,* represented in a painting on the wall of the princess' apartment, became animated, and took her seat upon a *chowrung* before them. Who this Shaloonky was, and the purport of her visit, shall form the subject of another chapter.

* A bird, *Gracula religiosa.*

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CHAPTER VII.

Veytal reappears, in the form of a bird called Shaloonky, and commences to relate the history of Queen Shoodhamutty, her son Soomunt, and the Princess Malattee.

WHEN Veytal, as the parrot, had left the presence of Vickramadetea and the princess, he transformed himself into a Shaloonky, who, as we said at the conclusion of the last chapter, took up her place, to the wonder of the gaping assembly, on a *chowrung*. She remained there for some time, shaking her wings and attracting attention in a most singular manner. Vickramadetea observing this, and knowing well that the Shaloonky was no other, as has been already said, than the spirit Veytal, requested her to oblige the company with one of those very interesting tales which abounded alike in good sense and instruction. He said it would be very acceptable, and would prevent them from falling asleep during the remainder of the night. "The parrot has but just left us," said he, "after recounting one of those admirable stories, which caused the time to pass agreeably away. I hope you will not be less obliging." The Shaloonky replied, "Oh, my good brahmin! your mode of address inclines me to comply with your wish, but you must be aware that I cannot do so without the sanction of my mistress. I am her slave, and must receive my orders from her before I engage in anything." The princess remained silent, as before, and would not deign a reply. "Never mind the princess, your mistress," said Vickramadetea; "be good enough to proceed with your story; you will much oblige me by it." "I am aware of your anxiety to hear me, and I am equally disposed to gratify you, but you must excuse me if I refuse you the gratification unless I am warranted by the bidding of your hostess, my sovereign lady." The Shaloonky being appa-

rently determined not to proceed with her story without the express command of the princess, and curiosity being at its height among the attendants and slaves there assembled, they ventured to address the princess. "May it please you, good lady, to direct the Shaloonky to gratify our eagerness to hear her story. It will, we feel assured, afford us no small amount of pleasure and amusement, as we doubt not it will be an excellent one,—as good as, if not better than the one the parrot amused us with a while ago." The princess was still silent, but the Veytal, by the peculiar powers of which he was possessed, influenced her mind, when she laughed involuntarily and bade the Shaloonky commence her narrative. Whereupon, after having noticed that the princess both laughed and spoke at the same time, she began as follows :—

"In the city of Kawnty there lived a king named Kasheishwer, and his queen Shoodhamutty, with an only child called Soomunt. According to the usual course of events, after a long and peaceful reign, this king expired, full of years and honour. Shortly after this sad occurrence, one of the neighbouring princes, who had long had an eye upon the kingdom of the deceased monarch, invaded it with a powerful army. The queen fled with her infant, who was but ten years old, without casting a thought behind. Weighed down with grief for the loss of her husband, she could ill take the active measures that were needed on such an occasion : she left all in the hands of her subordinates. She feared lest the fortunes of war should place her and the heir to the throne in the hands of their enemy, who might be induced to remove her dear child by some foul means, thus to put an end to all future contentions. She had not proceeded far when news reached her of the success of the invasion, and she thanked heaven that she with her child had escaped the unscrupulous enemy. Her patience was sorely tried by the hardships and privations she had to endure during her journey. Without any fixed placed to

go to, without the means of supplying herself and the infant with nourishment, and, more than all, without any apparent means of regaining her dominions and avenging the injury offered to her, she was indeed wretched in the extreme. Still, onward she went, remedying as much as in her lay these great evils, though, indeed, such remedies cannot be said to have by any means brought her the slightest relief. For a time she subsisted by parting one by one with the ornaments and jewels she had on when she fled from the palace: when these were all gone, alas! her condition was miserable indeed. How many a day did this fond mother deprive herself of food, that a sufficiency might be afforded her child! But this could not last long; nature would not permit it. Without food she must sink. She was in the very last stage of weakness: a feather's weight might have sealed her fate. The cravings of hunger she tried to appease by partaking of the wild fruits of the forest, and this but added to her sufferings. In this state, between hope (faint though it was) and despair, she thought of a brother she had, also a king, who was immensely rich and very powerful. This idea, as it crossed her mind, cheered the dreariness with which she was enveloped, and raised her sinking heart. Towards him, therefore, she turned her steps. He was reigning in a city far from where she then was; and the condition in which she arrived there may therefore be better conceived than described. No sooner did she present herself before the king her brother than he was struck dumb with the woeful picture of want and misery his sister presented. He received her with open arms, and soothed her grief with many words of consolation and the promise of seeing her righted, if possible. After hearing her relation of all the sufferings she had undergone, and the cruel usage she had endured from the invader of her husband's dominions, he addressed her thus: 'Let me entreat you, dear sister, great as are the wrongs which have been heaped upon you, not to give way. Be assured that the Almighty never wills a thing without a good design. Though the

events that have happened to you may appear to the short-sighted vision of man as cruel and unmerited in the extreme, some good will most probably be the result. In the mean while, you are welcome to my palace and to my arms. You may for the future reside here with your child, whose education I take upon myself. You will here meet with every deference due to your exalted rank.' This in a great measure helped to assuage the grief of the widowed queen, and she took up her abode, with her infant, under the protection of her brother, with whom she lived in the greatest comfort and harmony.

"The brother of the unfortunate Shoodhamutty had a daughter about four years old, who was called Malattee. Her virtues, modest deportment, and fascinating manners, won the esteem and love of all who came in contact with her. In beauty she rivalled Rutty.* One day this youthful princess was engaged in the amusements to which children are more or less addicted, when her father happened to pass by. She looked so beautiful, with the flush on her cheek called forth by the eagerness with which she pursued her game, that the father stopped to admire her. After gazing for awhile, unseen by her, he approached her, clasped her to his affectionate bosom, and loaded her with kisses. While so engaged he addressed her in the most affectionate words. 'Daughter,' said he, 'you have now arrived at an age fitted to receive good and useful impressions; I therefore wish to send you to school. You must endeavour to make yourself acquainted with everything fitted to adorn your rank and position, and the station in life which you will some day or other be called upon to fill.' That same day he ordered a clever Pundit to be brought to him, and entrusted the child to his care, directing him to instruct her in the first instance in the accomplishments suited to her capacity, and by degrees to lead her mind to higher and nobler acquisitions; in short, to pay every possible attention to her improvement. The Pundit, in obedience to the

* The spouse of the God of Love.

command of his sovereign, took the princess under his care, and at once began to impart to her the first lessons.

" A few days after this occurrence, the widow of Kasheishwer, having discovered that her brother had sent his daughter to school, requested that he would place her son Soomunt also under the care of the Pundit, being of an age when he should commence his studies. The king, her brother, acceded to the request, and recommended the youth to the Pundit, at the same time giving strict injunctions to the pedagogue to take as much care of his nephew as he bestowed upon the princess, and on no account to make the slightest difference between them, as he cared equally for both. The Pundit did as he was directed, and took them both under his tuition. From that day the Princess Malattee and Prince Soomunt became fondly attached to each other, and their love increased and gained strength with their years.

" One day, the princess, being in a cheerful humour and exuberant spirits, was engaged in discussing a variety of subjects with the prince, and began playfully to tease him while arguing with him. Prince Soomunt penetrated her thoughts, and knowing the motives which prompted her, felt much grieved, so he begged her to desist from such proofs of her regard. He desired her, also, to converse with him no longer in that strain. 'Princess,' said he, 'why do you thus tempt me? Is there any hope of your becoming my wife?' 'Ah, yes!' said she, 'there can be no doubt that I am destined to become your partner for life, and if you do not object to it, I here promise to be constant to you.' 'My good princess,' replied the youth, 'think well, I entreat you, ere you pledge yourself to anything. How can I place any reliance on what you may now feel disposed to say? You are but a child yet, and do not know what you promise. Consult your parents first, and take their advice: ascertain whether they are favourable to our union. You should be guided by them in all things, for it is your duty so to be. They are older and wiser than yourself, and

therefore better able to enter into such momentous subjects. They have, I doubt not, already formed a plan for your disposal,—perhaps intending to wed you to some other prince; and though my heart may break in such case, I must submit to my fate. It would ill become me, a dependant on your father's bounty, to raise my voice against it.' 'You may rely on what I now say,' rejoined the princess; 'I swear to you that with none other but yourself will I ever marry. I have bestowed my maiden affections on you: all others can be nothing more to me than what they are now.' The prince, observing the determined tone in which the princess spoke, could not doubt her sincerity, and therefore said, 'My dear Malattee, I resign myself entirely to you, and swear in my turn never to forsake you. No other woman shall be allowed even for a moment to contend for the place you must ever after this hold in my heart.' Thus their first declaration of love ended in their swearing mutual constancy, nor did it once pass beyond their own bosoms. Their affection for each other daily increased, being strengthened indissolubly by their constant intercourse.

"The princess was now fast approaching the age at which it was thought desirable, by the nobility and princes of those days, that she should enter the hymeneal state. The king, her father, therefore ordered his minister to make overtures to a prince whom he thought fitted, both in person and acquirements, to receive his daughter in marriage. The minister told the king that ere he set about this mission it would be nothing but right that they should consult with a Josey* as to a good and auspicious hour at which to determine the matter, which was accordingly done. Having been directed by the Josey as to the precise time of departure and so forth, the minister commenced his journey, with a select band of retainers, and proceeded to the city of Brumhapoory, towards the north. After a short and prosperous journey he arrived at that city, and presented himself with his credentials before the reigning sovereign.

* An astrologer.

The king was pleased to think that so powerful a monarch as he whose minister was now at his court should seek his alliance; and being convinced at a glance, as it were, of the advantages to be derived from it, he proceeded, as a preliminary of what was to follow, to receive the minister with every demonstration of joy and respect. He said that he had an only son, who was considered to be a youth of no mean parts; it would be perhaps wrong in him to eulogise his own child, but he would introduce him to the minister, who would thus be able to judge for himself. For his own part, he would be only too happy to meet the wishes of the king who sought thus to strengthen their friendship. If his son should be pleased with the description given of the princess, and the minister satisfied with the prince, nothing would remain but to fix a day on which to consummate the union. The prince was soon after introduced to the minister, who was struck at the very first with his beauty and bearing: In conversation the young man displayed such wisdom and power of thought, that, so far as he was able to form an opinion in so short a time, the minister considered him to be a fit and acceptable partner for the princess on whose behalf he had been sent. He therefore expressed his satisfaction to the prince's father, and promised him, on the part of his king, that the prince should be accepted as the future husband of the Princess Malattee; requesting at the same time that all the necessary preparations should be made for the marriage ceremony. Shortly after this he took leave of the monarch, and returned to his own city, where, with much joy, he communicated to his sovereign the successful termination of his mission, and the good fortune he had met with in securing a prince in every respect worthy of the honor,—the son of the king of Brumhapoory. He added that the king, accompanied by the prince and his whole court, would in a short time come to celebrate the marriage of the young couple. The king was delighted to hear what the minister had to say in favor of his future son-in-law, and of the success he had met

with, and gave immediate directions for everything necessary and suitable to be prepared for the occasion.

"The news of the approaching nuptials of the Princess Malattee with a foreign prince, spread like wildfire, and the unfortunate Prince Soomunt heard it among the rest. He instantly sought an interview with his cousin, and having obtained it, said to her, 'My dear Malattee, can you explain the meaning of so much bustle, confusion, and preparation, as I observe throughout the palace?' The princess replied, that she knew not what it meant, and asked in her turn if the prince could enlighten her on the subject. Soomunt looked searchingly at her for a moment, and then said, 'Princess, I need hardly say that it will now be impossible for you to fulfil your engagement with me, and it would perhaps be wrong in me to expect you to do so. The preparations that you now see going forward are the prelude to your marriage with a foreign prince, son of the king of Brumhapoory, whom your father has accepted as your future husband.' The prince's looks did not accord with his apparent composure, and the princess perceiving it, replied, 'My dearest prince—my love!—do not allow yourself to be thus disturbed. If my father has pledged his royal word to unite me to the prince you have but just mentioned, recollect that I have long, long before that, bestowed my affections on you, and sealed the compact with a solemn oath to become yours and none other's. I am solely yours, and I call heaven to witness that I will never go back from my word, and thus be guilty of perjury and ingratitude. Depend on me. Compose yourself and be patient. Let the bridegroom come!' So saying, the lovers separated.

"Every preparation being completed, the king sent for the sovereign of Brumhapoory, and invited a large number of friends on both sides to be present at the feast. He erected a commodious and very richly-furnished building for the reception of visitors, and for the celebration of the marriage ceremony. The king of Brumhapoory soon after arrived, and with him a numerous host of friends, relatives,

and retainers, as well as a number of elephants and horses, and a large army, all richly and gracefully adorned, befitting the grand and joyous occasion. The princess' father hearing of it, went forth with a retinue to honor the king of Brumhapoory, and to lead him into the city, after the usual *simunt poojea.** Having performed all the ceremonies usual on such occasions, they entered the city together, amidst the joyful shouts of the people, and spent the day in great festivity. On the following day they worshipped the customary divinity, according to the established practice, and it was agreed that the marriage should take place the same night at twelve o'clock. The king, Malattee's father, conducted his guests, both nobles and princes, in procession, to bring the bridegroom to his house; the queen also accompanied them, with the ladies of the court and the wives of the nobles and citizens, to honour the bridegroom's mother.

"It was now nearly eight o'clock, and the bride was seated in the palace, near the Gowrihar.† The inmates of the palace were all engaged in their respective employments, and the attendants of the princess, overcome by sleep, had extended themselves one after the other on the floor. The princess, at intervals, anxiously looked around, to see if Prince Soomunt were visible, but he was not to be found. He had intended accompanying her father to escort the bridegroom, but with much grief and suffering and many inward pangs. He went a short distance, but he felt so oppressed that he could go no further; he therefore returned to the palace without the knowledge of any one, nor did the king or anybody else notice the grief that was weighing him down: they were too much elated with the joy they felt at the approaching nuptials to perceive it. As soon as the prince reached the palace, he proceeded at once towards

* The honours and courtesies paid at the village boundary, or in the temple, to the bridegroom.

† The name under which Shiva and Parvutty are worshipped at marriage ceremonies.

the apartment in which he thought he was likely to find the princess, intending to take his last fond leave of her. The princess saw him, and having beckoned him to approach nearer, herself advancing towards him, said, 'There is in my father's stable a horse very swift of foot,—he can go over twelve *yojuns* in an hour. Do not lose time: go and bring him here, saddled and bridled.' The prince immediately went in search of the horse, the princess in the mean while occupying herself in selecting some clothes and valuables; having secured which, and the horse also being just then brought by the prince, they both mounted him, and, leaving the palace, went out of the city by an unfrequented road. They went on, without once stopping, until they arrived at a grove in which there were a number of mango trees in full bearing. Just then it occurred to the princess that she had forgotten to bring with her a valuable garland, composed of nine sorts of jewels, which had been prepared for the occasion of her wedding, but had left it at the Gowrihar, where she was seated when the prince met her on his return from the marriage procession. She appeared very anxious to obtain this garland; the prince therefore proposed that she should wait at the grove while he went back to the palace to recover it, promising to return in a short time. The night being far advanced and extremely dark, and the distance to be traversed very great, the princess was unwilling to allow the prince to hazard the risk of the attempt; he, however, assured her he would take every precaution, and not stay long away from her. To prevent any mistake on his return, and that she might be sure none other than himself approached her in the darkness of the night, he said he would utter a peculiar sound as a signal, which was agreed upon between the lovers. He then left her in the grove, under cover of the foliage of the trees, and directed his steps towards the palace. He was not long in gaining admittance there, unnoticed by any of the numerous attendants who now thronged the court-yard and every avenue leading to the

royal mansion. He recovered the treasure, in short, and began to retrace his steps to where he had left the princess anxiously praying for the success of his mission and for his speedy arrival.

"The locality in which the luckless Malattee had found a temporary shelter was infested by a notorious gang of thieves, one of whom, unfortunately, happened to be near enough to overhear the parting dialogue of the lovers. Allowing a sufficient time to elapse, the thief approached the princess, and gave the signal agreed upon. As soon as the princess heard it, and without in the least suspecting it could be any one but the prince, she hastened delightedly forward to meet him. Though her anxiety of mind and apprehension had been very acute during the short interval which had elapsed, she felt amply repaid for it now. Coming up, therefore, to him whom she imagined to be the prince, she held out her hand and welcomed him. The impostor did not allow her to enter into any lengthy talk, but immediately brought forward the horse that had been left standing beside her, and urged her speedily to resume her seat. The poor victim, fearing that perhaps the prince had been discovered, and was pursued by her father's men, lost not a moment in complying, and thus, seated beside the thief, she was carried along with great swiftness, under the experienced guidance of one to whom every inch of ground was familiar. The darkness was so intense that they could not see each other's faces, neither could the princess speak, so great was the rapidity with which they travelled; the wily thief, also, preserved a strict silence, which the princess attributed to the same cause. The morning was now fast breaking, and the warblings of the feathered songsters of the woods began to be heard. Malattee, finding that the horse had been made to slacken his pace, was congratulating herself and the prince upon their escape. She was now quite easy in her mind, thinking that their pursuers, if any there were, must now have been left so far behind as to be unable to overtake or even trace them. In this state of

mind she addressed her companion in the Sanscrit, the language usually employed by princes and nobles in those days, but the thief, not being familiar with it, could not respond to the sentiments she expressed, many of which called for reply. She, as may naturally be concluded, was surprised at this unusual silence on the part of the prince, who formerly had barely allowed a word to escape her without participating fully in her feelings and responding to them, or, if wrong, gently correcting them. At this time, too, there was sufficient light for distinguishing each other, and, oh!—with what horror and dismay did she not behold, as she turned an inquiring glance on the man beside her, the countenance which was presented to her wondering eyes! He had neither nose nor ears,—his right hand had been cut off at the wrist,—he was black and dirty, coarsely clad, and presented altogether a most unseemly and revolting appearance! She screamed at the sight of this wretched and frightful-looking being, and soon lost all her presence of mind. He tried to soothe her, and the princess, becoming gradually aware of the position she was in, and suspecting into what hands she had fallen, was wise and considerate enough not to carry her antipathy too far, lest he should be provoked to ill-treat her. She became at last calm; her sorrow, however, weighed heavily upon her, and she was in all respects an object of pity; yet she very prudently refrained from audibly expressing the agony of her feelings.

"It was now broad day, the sun began to shed forth his lustre from the heavens, and they were approaching a city which stood before them. The thief, addressing Malattee, said, 'Fair princess, I wish you to understand that I am a resident in yonder city. I am about to convey you to my house, and it is my earnest request that you will for the future consider yourself mistress of all I possess. By attending to my concerns and presiding over my domestic affairs, you will secure for yourself a happy retreat, and also enjoy every sort of pleasure.' Malattee disguised her

feelings, and said, 'Your kindness overpowers me! What you have proposed is quite agreeable to me, and accords with my wishes. I will do as you please. But hearken to what I have to say: it is now broad daylight; if I were to accompany you into the city, it is more than probable that we should attract attention. Some of the king's attendants or domestics might meet us, and, seeing me in your company, would immediately suspect you of having become possessed of me by some foul means. Acting upon such a conclusion they will most assuredly separate us, do you some grievous harm, or detain you in custody. What will then become of me? Your kindness and humane disposition have greatly pleaded for you, and I feel now that I could not have fallen into better hands. Would you then be so cruel as to work your own ruin and mine, by exposing yourself to the consequences of being seen with me in the public thoroughfare? Let me entreat you to consent to pass the day with me in some secluded place, and we can enter the city at night.' She displayed such evident signs of sincerity in all she said, that the thief was quite vain enough to think he had touched her heart. He therefore thought the advice good, and accordingly resolved upon acting on it. They went into one of the gardens, which were numerous in the outskirts of the town, there to await the approach of night. The princess first alighted from the horse, and the thief followed. She then opened the saddle-bags, took out some gold coins, and, giving them to her companion, said, 'Go you to the market-place and procure some provisions for us, and, above all, do not forget to purchase a vessel that will contain food for two.' The thief was so smitten with the charms of the princess, and so thoroughly convinced of his feelings being reciprocated, that no suspicion found an entrance for a moment into his mind, so completely had the princess hoodwinked him. He set off for the market, as he had been bidden, and purchased all that he had been directed, as well as various other articles which he thought would be acceptable to the princess.

In the mean while, no sooner had the thief turned his back, than the princess, divesting herself of her garments, dressed herself in those of Prince Soomunt, and by this means she wrought so complete a transformation in her appearance that her nearest friends would scarcely have recognised her. She lost no time in mounting her horse, and then set off on her flight, taking the forward road, being afraid to retrace her path, lest she should be pursued and overtaken by the thief.

"Shortly after the princess had made her escape, the thief returned, loaded with the purchases he had been making, but, to his utter confusion and disappointment, he found that both the horse and the princess had disappeared. Now, only, did the deluded wretch became sensible of the ruse put on him by the princess to lull his suspicions, the result of which he but too painfully felt. So enamoured had he become of the princess, that he was like one beside himself when the truth for the first time flashed across his mind;—he swore, stamped his feet, and displayed all the symptoms of an ungovernable and inordinate passion. Overcome by his violence, he sank to the ground in an agony of despair, and deplored his misfortune, as he termed it, in the following strain :—'Ah! what an execrable fool am I! Almost at the very moment when, without any pains on my part, this treasure of inestimable worth was thrown in my way, I have, by my own folly and blindness, lost it for ever! I am the most miserable of beings! Unlucky I am and have been, and unlucky I shall remain through life! As well might a string of pearls be given to an ape, a brilliant jewel to one born blind, or a soft and impressive speech be addressed to a deaf man! I have proved myself little or no better than these. The cup that was offered to me contained all that man could desire, and yet have I, like an idiot,—a fool, a blind infatuated fool!—dashed it from my lips, and turned from the proffered boon!' In a state bordering on despair, and fully determined not to continue living in the world as he had so far done, he dyed his

clothes brown, converted his dress into that of a devotee, and went roaming about different countries, in the exercise of penance and religious duties.

"The princess in the mean time had gone far on her travels. One hot day, as she was leisurely proceeding along, she overheard an altercation between two young men. They were pupils of an ascetic, who, before he died, a short time previous, had bequeathed three different articles to them, which were to be equally divided. They could not, however, come to an amicable settlement as regarded the partition of the bequest. They were yet disputing when the princess, still in disguise, happened to ride past them. They resolved to appeal to her, which was accordingly done. Nearly in the same breath they unfolded to her the cause of their dispute. The princess desired to know what were the three things which had been left to them by their tutor; upon which they produced a wallet, a bowl or plate, and a pair of wooden shoes. The princess then asked them to inform her of the use of these articles. In their simplicity they told her that the plate, if duly reverenced and entreated, would yield forthwith an abundance of *shoodpukwan*,* that the wallet would produce any amount of gold, and that the shoes would transport their owner to any part of the world on his merely expressing the wish. Malattee, on hearing this explanation, said that she could not pronounce any judgment unless they agreed to abide by it, and to do as she would bid them. Being desirous to put an end to their contention, they at once consented to this, whereupon she pointed to a tree at a distance, and said, 'He who returns first to me after running to that tree and touching it, shall become the possessor of two of these articles, and the other shall take the remaining one for his share.' They agreed to this, and, placing the three articles in the hands of their umpire, started away at their utmost speed towards the tree. When they had placed a good distance between them and the princess, the latter, availing herself of the

* Pure confectionery.

favorable opportunity that now presented itself, whipped her horse and sped away at a rapid rate in an opposite direction, with the valuable articles in her possession. She did not draw rein until she had gallopped over some fifteen *yojuns* of road. The two pupils, having touched the tree indicated, ran back one after the other to receive from the hands of the umpire what had fallen to their respective shares; but how great was their astonishment and dismay at finding that both the rider and the horse had disappeared whilst they had been engaged in contending for the prize, and with them also the three valuable articles, which were their all. They examined every nook in which they thought the umpire might have concealed himself, but all to no purpose, and at length they gave up the search in despair. It was now that they become conscious of the absurdity of their dispute, whereby, not only had neither reaped the slightest benefit, but a stranger had become enriched. 'It is a just punishment,' said they, 'and will teach us to be more discreet and less confiding for the future.' Nevertheless, they grieved much for their loss. It has been truly observed that internal commotions profit only those who hover around the contending parties; the latter are never benefitted. Thus two brothers, disputing each other's claim on the property left by a parent, go to law, and are thereby drained of every coin they possess, until at length, lacking the means of carrying on the litigation, they are left impoverished, powerless, and full of remorse for their want of foresight and their mismanagement.

"The Princess Malattee, during her flight, might have been observed to scan the horizon from time to time, to see if she were pursued; and, as no sign betokened such to be the case, she stopped her horse, and entered a temple of Shiva, which was near. Having paid her devotions to the idol, she reposed there for the remainder of the day. While there, she thought frequently of Prince Soomunt, and felt great anxiety as to his fate. She spent most of the night in endeavouring to devise some mode by which to obtain

intelligence of him, but nothing likely to succeed occurred to her; it was with a heavy heart, therefore, that she set out on her journey on the morrow. About noon she reached a large city, the king of which, as she heard, had lately died and left no successor,—neither son, brother, cousin, or any other relative. The minister, after the last sad rites had been paid to the deceased monarch, summoned a council to elect a person to fill the throne. The several councillors and nobles made many propositions and suggestions, but at length the minister spoke as follows:—'I have heard it declared by a most learned hermit, that it is affirmed in the divine law that a selection in such cases as this should be thus made: a female elephant, richly adorned, with a chaplet or string of flowers on her trunk, should be let loose in the city, and on whoever she may place this chaplet of flowers, that same person should be proclaimed king.' This was highly approved of, seconded, and carried by acclamation. A female elephant was immediately procured, and, having been completely decorated for the occasion, and the chaplet placed on her trunk, she was allowed to roam at large about the city. At the same time a number of musicians were engaged, who by their performances gave effect to the proceeding; the troops also marched out in warlike array, and paraded on each side of the elephant, which continued to roam about until sunset, without deigning to bestow the chaplet on any of those assembled on the plain, who, one and all, from the prince to the peasant, were clad in their holiday apparel. That day passed, as we have said, without the selection being made; and all the people retired for the night. The next day the ceremony was repeated, but with the same result, and the like on the third day; but on the fourth, the elephant was seen to proceed towards the outskirts of the town, where she encountered the Princess Malattee making towards the city gate, and, going up to her, unhesitatingly put the chaplet around her neck, and then, lifting her gently from off her horse, placed her on her own back. The elephant now

steadily marched up to the palace, and halted before the minister, councillors, and nobles, who had assembled there in anticipation of paying their homage to their new monarch. There Malattee alighted, and was received with every demonstration of respect and obedience; the air being rent with shouts of 'Long life and prosperity to the new king!' The minister and the other members of the court then wished to know by what name she was to be distinguished, and she told them the name of her lover—Soomunt. They then imparted to her the circumstances attending the demise of the late king, and ended by investing her with the royal prerogatives. Shortly after, the courtiers paid their usual homage, and retired to their respective houses.

"The new king (who is for the present to be known as Soomunt) was now seated on the throne, having been acknowledged monarch by the whole population. For many days successively the city was in a state of rejoicing, and a profusion of alms were bestowed on the poor; Malattee passing the time in a delirium of joy. The minister then called a council, which afforded the new monarch the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, for Malattee was anxious to obtain intelligence of her absent lover,—as to what part of the world he was in, and in what circumstances situated. She therefore took advantage of the opportunity thus presented, and directed the minister to make it known throughout her dominions that she would hold an *anashutre*,* to entertain strangers of every description; and that, after they had partaken of the food prepared for them, each and all of them were to present themselves in person before her, to receive the *virah*.† Arrangements were accordingly made to carry out the *anashutre*, and persons appointed to invite all devotees and hermits to it. Malattee also fixed upon a time at which to distribute the *virah* in person.

* A charitable act,—the distribution of food to travellers and wayfarers.

† A betel-leaf, rolled up with betel-nut, khat, lime, and spices, ready to be put into the mouth.

" Leaving them all thus engaged in their respective tasks, we will now return to the real Prince Soomunt, whom we left on his way back from the palace to the grove, after regaining possession of the jewelled garland.

CHAPTER VIII.

Veytal concludes his tale, and disappears.

"PRINCE SOOMUNT hastily returned, with the garland, to the grove where he had left the princess, and began to search for the horse he had hid under the tree. The night was so dark that nothing could be distinguished, and he found neither the horse nor the princess. Thinking, however, that he might possibly have mistaken the tree, he continued looking for them a long time, but it was all to no purpose, —they were nowhere to be found. He became uneasy as the conviction gradually gained upon him that some misfortune had befallen the princess. The question as to whether Malattee could be capable of practising a foul deception upon him, for a moment intruded itself in his mind, but it was at once discarded, as being unworthy of himself and cruelly unjust to her. Had then some thief or other ill-disposed person forcibly taken her away?—or had she in terror returned to her father's palace? He was thus lost in conjecture, without being able to arrive at anything like a satisfactory solution of the mystery in which the princess' disappearance was shrouded, and so he remained until the night was far advanced. He then thought, and wisely too, that if the princess had not returned to the palace, her father would, as soon as her absence became known, lose no time in scouring the country far and near in search of her, and it would therefore be rash in him needlessly to expose himself to discovery. He therefore disguised himself, and set out towards the north, after carefully securing the garland round his waist. He travelled under the guise of a Manbhavy,* with his clothes dyed a reddish hue, as usually worn by such men. During his

* A member of a certain heretical order.

wanderings the Princess Malattee was never out of his thoughts. His food consisted of the fruits he found on the road-side. In his course he explored a great many cities and villages, in the hope of discovering his lost love; and at every religious place he met with he performed the ceremonies enjoined by Hindu law, and at such times a large share of his supplications were in Malattee's behalf, his grief for her loss continuing unabated. Having reached the Sihandree mountain, he visited the shrine of Shree Dutatia,* and paid his devotions to him. During his stay in this sacred place, he felt much depressed in mind while pondering on the ill fate which had separated him in so sudden and unexpected a manner from his much-loved Malattee. One day, while as usual deploring his misfortune, he heard a voice issue from the heavens, saying, 'Prince! grieve no more, but take courage! Thy beloved Malattee shall soon be restored to thee!' The prince gazed in silent awe in the direction whence the voice had proceeded, and, being convinced that his ears had not deceived him, he felt his sinking hopes fast revive. A great change was soon perceptible in him, and he was gradually restored to ease and tranquillity. He remained at that place nine days, and then left it in pursuit of his journey.

"The Princess Malattee's father brought the bridegroom to his palace, to the great delight of all there assembled, and the princes and nobles, officers and distinguished citizens, took their respective seats in the audience-hall. Musicians engaged for the occasion performed on various instruments, and every sign of perfect and joyous festivity was to be seen about the palace. The time for uniting the youthful pair was now fast approaching, and the priest desired the king to bring forth the princess. The king went into the palace to seek her, but although he made the strictest search she was nowhere to be found! He enquired of the queen if she knew where the princess was, and she advised him to look for her in the chamber of the

* A particular incarnation of Shiva.

Gowrihar, where she might possibly have fallen asleep. She was not there! It was soon known throughout the palace that the princess had disappeared, and each person ran in a different direction to search for her. Every apartment in the palace, every neighbouring house, every quarter of the city, and even the wells and ponds, into which they thought she might possibly, in the darkness of the night, have fallen, were all by turns examined with lighted torches; but nothing, not even the slightest trace, could be found. The king now remembered that Prince Soomunt had not appeared among the assembled nobles at the palace, and he therefore enquired of his sister Shoodhamutty where her son was. She replied that she had not seen him since that morning. They then began to search for *him*, but this proved equally unsuccessful. At this stage the queen informed the king that for some time past Prince Soomunt and the Princess Malattee had been so intimate that they were scarcely or ever seen apart, and if Soomunt happened to be out, Malattee became uneasy and impatient for his return; that she would not even eat unless he shared her meal; and that they had been in the daily habit of sitting in discourse together for a long time, although everybody was ignorant of the nature of their conversation.

"The king regretted exceedingly this unexpected misfortune, and suspected that the elopement, of which he was now fully convinced, could not have taken place without the cognisance of his sister Shoodhamutty. The latter declared solemnly, however, that she knew nothing of the flight, and said that if she was in any way concerned in it she hoped the Almighty would punish her. She felt so greatly hurt at the unjust suspicions of her brother that she wept aloud. 'Alas!' sighed she, 'here have I passed my early days of widowhood, with my only son, in the bosom of my brother's family, earnestly hoping to meet with that happiness which, it would now appear, is denied to me, perhaps on account of my sins. I see I am doomed to suffer much grief and trouble in this world: I am even now

left in a forlorn condition. Oh, God! thou hast indeed made me as destitute as the man to whom a wayfarer applied for a little milk, and who, with his usual liberality, was about to bestow it upon him, but when he approached his cow for the purpose of obtaining the milk, her calf fell down and immediately expired! Soomunt and Malattee have gone away of their own free will and accord, and have left me to sorrow, and in discord with my brother!' Thus she gave vent to her feelings, wounded by the suspicions entertained of her.

"Finding no probability of recovering the lost Malattee, the king resolved on marrying his younger daughter, Mallanee, to the deserted bridegroom. He therefore ordered her to bathe and adorn her person for the occasion; and the union was at once celebrated, with all the usual pomp and festivity, which lasted four successive days.

"Shortly after the marriage of the king's younger daughter with Malattee's bridegroom had taken place, as above related, the newly-married couple, laden with magnificent presents from the king, consisting of lands, slaves, elephants, horses, gold, and jewels, set forward with the king of Brumhapoory, father of the prince, on their return, accompanied a great way beyond the city gates by the bride's father and a host of nobles and citizens. At parting they exchanged mutual expressions of good-will. The king (Malattee's father), on returning to his palace, was pained to observe the grief in which he had plunged his sister by his unjust suspicions; so he went to her, and endeavoured by every means in his power to soothe and comfort her. He told her not to be sorry on account of the ingratitude of her son and the princess, for that they would doubtless be heard of at some future time. 'As long as you are living with me,' said he, 'you shall be treated with every respect and courtesy, and shall be in want of nothing that I can provide for you.'

"Prince Soomunt travelled, in the guise he had assumed, through several cities, and visited many religious places.

One day he arrived at a city called Vodajagonath,* which is a very curious place. He resided there for a year, during which time he met with the same wicked thief who had deprived him of his affectionate Malattee. It happened that as the thief and the prince were seated a little apart from each other in a garden, near some mango trees, a ripe fruit fell just at the feet of the thief, who, without cleaning himself or rising from his seat, raised the mango to his mouth with his hands, and ate it. Prince Soomunt was much surprised at this, as their religion did not admit of such a practice. He therefore addressed the thief. 'Well, friend,' said he, 'you appear as a religious mendicant, and yet have eaten the mango without cleaning yourself. How unmeaning is your garb, then! You are a disgrace to the whole race of mendicants!' The thief replied, 'Friend, some time ago I had the unexpected good fortune of obtaining from an usurper an inestimable jewel, in the shape of the most handsome and amiable young lady my eyes ever beheld. I conducted her to my own city, but, before I could introduce her to my dwelling, she played me a sorry trick. I was fool enough to believe all she said, and thus, by my own folly, I destroyed all my hopes of future happiness.' In short, he related the whole occurrence to Soomunt, and in conclusion observed, 'I ate the mango in the manner you observed, lest I should be deprived of it as I was of my former prize.' The prince heard him out, with every symptom of disgust and abhorrence, and the thief, after he had done speaking, observing the manner in which his explanation was received, thought it unsafe to remain any longer in that place; he therefore arose and departed on his journey. The prince remained for awhile meditating on the ill luck that had befallen him, for, from what the thief had just told him he was inclined to believe, and *did* believe, that Malattee was the jewel he had spoken of. He was now satisfied that Malattee had not returned

* The name of the celebrated idol worshipped in Orissa, on the Coromandel coast.

to the palace. 'No,' thought he, 'she has abandoned the enjoyments of a court for my sake, escaped from the hands of a ravisher, and is perhaps even now engaged in tracing me out. Oh! would that I could meet her soon!'

"The thief went on his journey, and travelled till he arrived at the *anashutre* which Malattee, under the name of Soomunt, had ordered, where he dined upon the dainty dishes provided for him as well as for others of his class, and was then conducted by an attendant to the king, to receive the *virah*. When Malattee saw him she recognised him at once, and questioned him closely as to why he had assumed the garb of a mendicant, and what were the reasons that had induced him to lead a rambling life. The thief was for a time completely dumbfoundered, but he soon regained his courage, and related everything connected with his distressing case, as he called it,—how he had gained a fair lady, and how he had been cheated by her. He said that he had adopted the habit he then wore as a punishment for the folly he had been guilty of. She laughed at the tale, and asked him how he had allowed himself to be thus tricked. 'Alas!' replied the thief, 'I lost her as I have already had the honor of telling your majesty, but can your majesty inform me how she can be regained?' 'I can, very well,' rejoined the king, 'but henceforth do not trouble yourself about her; remain, however, at the *anashutre*, where you will get your meals, and be content.' The thief promised obedience, and remained there, as the king had directed.

"Prince Soomunt having sojourned for many days at Vodajagonath, at last set out on his way. He happened to travel the road leading to the *anashutre* in the city where his beloved Malattee had established herself—the city of Pooshapamuny. The princess had given strict orders that no person should pass along that way without partaking of the *anashutre;* so the men, observing the prince, made known to him the orders of the king, and entreated his presence, as they had that of others who had preceded him;

but Prince Soomunt would not attend to their request. The men knew that if they forced the holy man the king would be displeased with them, and they feared also that Soomunt would curse them: he looked so grave and threatening that they drew back with a sort of instinctive dread, and hesitated to use violence. Our Manbhavy, however, promised to wait there until they had communicated his reply to their master; one of them, accordingly, went forward to the king, and acquainted him with the circumstances. The king was much pleased with the account he received of this Manbhavy or mendicant: he thought he would prove to be some holy man; he therefore bade the minister go with the attendant, and request him, on the part of the king, to favor the court with his presence. The minister accordingly went out to where Soomunt was, and, approaching the prince, threw himself at his feet, very earnestly and most cordially inviting him to the *anashutre*. Soomunt told him that he had for a long time past refrained from the use of all delicacies in the shape of food, and that it was therefore of no use their endeavouring to prevail upon him to be present at the *anashutre*. The minister then desired Soomunt to favour him by waiting there until he had informed his master of his reply, on which Soomunt looked displeased at the minister, and said, 'Why should I wait here while you go and inform your master of what I have said? He may be a very good and honorable king to you, but to me the rich and the poor are both alike. Therefore, I pray you, let me go.' The minister tried all the means in his power to induce him to remain, and at last, after having expended almost the whole store of his arguments, he prevailed upon the Manbhavy to wait until he had reported the matter to the king. Accordingly, the minister went to the palace, and told the king all that had occurred. Malattee listened with much astonishment, and decided that it would be unworthy of them to allow the mendicant to depart without entertaining him. As may well be imagined, Prince Soomunt was her daily thought

and her nightly dream, and it now struck her, strangely enough, that perhaps this might prove to be Soomunt himself. As this idea crossed her mind, she ordered a horse to be brought to her immediately, and having mounted, she rode out to the spot where the Manbhavy was impatiently awaiting permission to prosecute his journey. She soon distinguished him, seated on a stone in the road, and as her eye rested on him she recognised her long-lost and dear Prince Soomunt! She rode up to him, prostrated herself at his feet, and, with clasped hands and glistening eyes, paid him pure and earnest adoration, after the manner prescribed by the Hindu law for a devotee. She then entreated him to accompany her to her abode, but the Manbhavy replied, 'No; I have no business at your majesty's palace, since, as I have already told your minister, I have taken a vow against partaking of dainties.' 'No matter,' replied Malattee; 'I shall feel highly obliged by your kindly complying with my request; and I hope and trust that the Almighty will in due time restore you to your former position and happiness.' She managed, after much persuasion, to prevail upon him to accompany her to the palace in a palanquin. When they had arrived there, the king and the mendicant adjourned to a private apartment, and the former desired the latter to make known the cause of his present disguise. 'You need not,' said the king, 'be under any apprehension. Speak freely.' Prince Soomunt, seeing the king so eager to learn his secret, immediately told him all, adding, 'When I returned from the palace with the garland, which I recovered in the chamber of the Gowrihar, and found that my beloved Malattee was not where I had left her, I searched every tree, one by one, thinking I might have missed the right one, but all to no purpose,—she was nowhere to be found! I then made as much haste as I could to escape the pursuit of my uncle, who would, I had no doubt, when he became aware of our absence, send troops out in search of us. Next morning, by sunrise, I had assumed the disguise you now see me in, and have since travelled through cities

innumerable, but have hitherto gained no tidings of my beloved! I at last thought she might have returned to her father's palace, but I have since learned the contrary from a wicked thief, in the disguise of a mendicant, who told me how he had taken her away that night from the grove, and how he was cheated by her under a pretext she formed of sending him to purchase provisions in the market, during which interval she escaped. This thief has also, for her sake, assumed the same disguise as myself. Since I parted from him up to the present moment, I have been almost a stranger to rest,—uneasiness of mind and the fatigues of the journey have totally banished sleep!' The Princess Malattee could not but be touched at the recital of the hardships and sufferings her beloved had undergone. However, she curbed her inclination a little longer, and said, 'Well, mendicant, do you intend to wander in search of her any more? She may be in some unknown place; if so, how can you expect to find her? She may ere now have found another lover, still more handsome than yourself; how then is it possible you can recover her from his hands? I would advise you to search for her no more. Live here happily with me: I will procure for you an excellent and beauteous lady who will respect you in a far greater degree than did your beloved Malattee.' 'Oh, gracious king!' said Soomunt in reply, 'pray hear me. With regard to women, I have sworn that they shall all be alike to me: I will never look on one save as a mother or a sister.' He then showed her the garland which he had always carried about with him, at sight of which, and the associations connected with it then crowding upon her mind, she was deeply affected, and could scarcely conceal her emotion. 'Do you think,' said she, 'that if your Malattee were to meet you in this place you would know her again?' 'She cannot be here,' replied he; 'and I beg you will excuse me for refusing to accept your invitation to remain. I would rather that this body of mine should fall gradually into decay, than that I should prove false to Malattee, and

break an oath so solemnly made.' When Malattee saw he was not to be moved from his purpose, she said, 'Your Malattee may have married some other person.' 'No,' replied he; 'your majesty must be aware that if she wished to marry any other, she would have married the man whom her father had with much trouble and expense procured for her; besides, she has sworn to look upon no other man save as a father or a brother. I am therefore quite easy on that head, knowing that nothing but death can sever us.' Hearing this, Malattee indulged in an immoderate fit of laughter. 'I hope,' said she, still laughing, 'you will now enjoy that happiness with your beloved Malattee which you have been so long deprived of, for she is now within my palace!' She desired him to wait there a moment, and she would bring her to him. She then went into her private apartments, took off her kingly robes, and, attiring herself in her marriage suit, with the ornaments she had worn on the day of their separation, she re-entered the room where Soomunt was in waiting. He recognised her at the first glance, ran to her, and tenderly embraced her. 'Ah! how much I am indebted to the king,' exclaimed he, 'who has so agreeably surprised me! Why does he not return, that I may thank him?' 'Do not expect to see the king any more,' replied the princess, with tears of joy in her eyes, 'but let us sit down, and I will explain the mystery to you.'

"They sat down, after the joy of Soomunt at this unexpected meeting had subsided, and the princess informed him of every circumstance that had befallen her since the night on which the garland had caused their separation, and also that the thief was then at the *anashutre*. They then began to express their gratitude to heaven, and to thank each other for their constancy in the most affectionate terms that true love could dictate. The prince chid Malattee gently for allowing him to remain so long in her presence without making herself known to him, but she prostrated herself before him, soliciting his pardon for it; and then

conducted him to a bath, which had been previously ordered to be prepared. On his return she took off his travelling garb, and arrayed him in a suit of unusual value and richness.

"It would be impossible to convey any just idea of Prince Soomunt's joy. He was heard to say to himself, 'Oh, the dear and generous princess! What a treasure has this day been restored to me! I thank heaven for guiding my steps to this city. It gives me cause to hope that a long life of happiness is before me—even more than my heart can be said to desire.' The next day Malattee did not appear in her kingly garb, but having dressed herself like one of her own sex, and as became her position in life, she sent for one of the officers, and ordered him to summon the minister to her apartment forthwith. When the minister entered the chamber, in obedience to the command of his king, he was surprised to see a lady of such extraordinary beauty there, and whom he had never before seen. The princess, however, put an end to his conjectures at once, by entering upon a relation of her own and Prince Soomunt's history. He listened to her in silence and admiration. When she had ended the narrative, she directed him to manage the affairs of her government, with as much care and diligence as possible, for the space of a month from that day, as she would not appear in court until her beloved Soomunt was perfectly recovered from the indisposition attendant upon his long and harassing journey. She would, however, give him all the assistance in her power during her temporary absence from the public.

"The Princess Malattee entertained the prince with a series of the most magnificent festivals, such as royalty alone could command: and every care and attention being at the same time bestowed on the restoration of his health, the prince, before the expiration of the month, had regained his usual strength and spirits, and was in all respects prepared to enter into any business of weight and importance. He now appeared to the princess, after the rest and comfort

he had enjoyed, far more handsome than ever: his finely-moulded limbs, his noble air, and the majesty of his person, all combined to render him one of the handsomest men, in all respects, ever seen.

"Shortly after this, Malattee summoned the minister and other nobles of the court, and acquainted them with her intention of placing Soomunt on the throne in her stead. They seemed much pleased to hear this, and there was not a single dissentient voice raised against the proposition. They each and all congratulated the prince, with much warmth and sincerity, and he was speedily placed upon the throne, amidst great and gorgeous celebrations, and with the usual ceremonies on such occasions. The new king was proclaimed throughout the city, and in all the adjacent places; and for several days together there was one continual flow of all that could tend to heighten the joy and increase the pleasure of the people at such an event. The rejoicings extended all over the kingdom, and couriers were despatched to different parts to make the event known far and near. Prince Soomunt entered into the business of state with so much confidence and majesty, and displayed such tact and ability, that he gained the admiration and well-merited approbation of all his subjects, so that they became, if possible, more than ever pleased with their sovereign; and everything prospered under his wise and discreet rule.

"The prince and princess (whom we must henceforth designate the king and queen) thus continued to live happily together for a considerable time. One morning, the queen began to take a retrospective view of their past lives, when it occurred to her that Queen Shoodhamutty might perhaps at that moment be suffering the deepest and most inconsolable grief for the loss of her only son, as she had had no opportunity of hearing from him since the night on which he absconded from the palace. She therefore mentioned the matter to her husband, and desired him to write to the king her father, acquainting him with all

that had befallen them since they left the palace, and with their present situation, as also with the nature of the oath that had been exchanged between them, and which was the cause of their elopement. King Soomunt immediately set about doing as he was desired, and wrote the letter, in which he dwelt at some length on the sufferings and hardships both himself and Malattee had undergone ere they had finally arrived at their present state of happiness, and respectfully, but in very forcible terms, pleaded their youth and the ardour of their love in extenuation of the indiscretion they had committed in leaving the palace, at the same time expressing deep regret for the consequent uneasiness and alarm they had caused their respective parents; he also affectionately and earnestly besought their forgiveness, more particularly that of his mother. When Soomunt had finished the letter, and sealed it, he despatched it by a trusty officer, and directed him to use all haste in delivering it to the king his uncle. When the officer arrived at the city, he went directly to the palace, and, having disclosed his mission, he was immediately taken before the king (Malattee's father). The officer prostrated himself before the monarch in the usual manner, and, after a short speech of deference and respect, presented the letter. The king perused it, and was much pleased with the eloquent and masterly style in which it was written; he immediately sent for his sister, and read it over again to her. In doing so, he paid a just compliment to her son by extolling his qualifications and merit in the highest possible terms.

"The receipt of the intelligence contained in Soomunt's letter naturally enough caused much joy, and to none more so than the widowed Shoodhamutty, whose happiness in learning that her son was living and in the enjoyment of good fortune and power, was indeed indescribable. So great was also the king's joy, that he ordered the intelligence to be published abroad, lest he should be overpowered with it by locking it up within his own bosom. 'It would be too much,' thought he, 'so I must even share it.'

"The king did not omit to distribute sugar in his city, as was usual when any great and joyous event occurred, in order that he might testify his delight. He ordered grand preparations to be made, and his equipage prepared, as he intended paying a visit to his nephew and daughter. Everything being ready, the king, with his sister, the royal family, and all the nobles and courtiers, set out on their journey. When their retinue drew near the city of Pooshapamuny, King Soomunt, who had received notice of it, went out to meet them, accompanied by his beloved Malattee and all the chiefs of his court. King Soomunt and the lovely Malattee were richly and magnificently dressed, with tiaras of diamonds encircling their brows, and otherwise decorated in a profuse manner with pearls and precious stones. King Soomunt rode on an elephant very richly caparisoned, and the handsome Malattee was carried in a palanquin decked out in the most gorgeous manner. They left the city amid the sounding of trumpets and hautboys, and the beating of drums. The meeting took place, and on both sides there was great emotion displayed. Soomunt and Malattee both affectionately embraced their royal parents, and they were in turn met with many expressions of love and esteem, and numberless sincere congratulations. The past was forgotten in the present. They then entered the city, amid the deafening shouts of all the assembled townspeople.

"King Soomunt conducted his uncle and mother to his rich and noble palace, and entertained them with every imaginable care and attention. Next day the marriage ceremony between king Soomunt and the faithful Malattee was solemnised, and great was the rejoicing throughout the whole city. The hearts of the lowly brahmins, as well as those of the more favored children of the clime, were alike gladdened by the rich presents and profuse liberality which characterised the proceedings of the day. King Soomunt was loaded with costly presents from his father-in-law; and, at the conclusion of all, the royal guests set forward on their return, excepting Queen Shoodhamutty, who remained

with her son, having decided on spending her declining years under his protection.

"King Soomunt and his lovely bride lived happily, surrounded with wealth and power, and in the enjoyment of contentment and peace, until they were, in the usual course of nature, gathered to their forefathers."

The Shaloonky, having finished her tale, told the Princess Pudmavuntty and the disguised brahmin that that was all she had to say, and immediately took her flight from the *chowrung*, and disappeared in the wall.

CHAPTER IX.

Veytal returns, in the shape of a peacock, and commences to relate the history of King Rutnamanee, his son Sewdass, Hurridass the Prime Minister's son, and the Princess Moheeny.

WHEN the Shaloonky had departed, a peacock appeared in her place. Vickramadetea, the disguised brahmin, seeing it, and knowing full well that it was the Veytal again, who had assumed that guise, requested the bird to amuse them with a tale. "Oh!" said the peacock, "I am ready to oblige you, but cannot do so unless the princess expresses her willingness to humour you in this respect." The Princess Pudmavuntty could not contain herself for laughter, in which she indulged for awhile, and then bade the peacock proceed. Before, however, the bird began his tale, he bowed to the brahmin, and begged to be permitted to express a hope that her highness and the company at large would be pleased to hearken attentively to what he was about to relate, as it would prove, he thought, much more entertaining and amusing than they perhaps anticipated. Those assembled in the room promised their best attention, and the bird thus began:—

"There was once a city called Rutnapoory, where, at one period, reigned a wise and discreet king named Rutnamance. His kingdom, which was very populous, was at peace with all the neighbouring dominions. Rutnamance had a minister named Vichakshun, and they were both men of virtue, and possessed of many good qualities, which rendered them objects of great love and respect to all who came within the sphere of their influence. Rutnamanee had also a son named Sewdass, who had a favourite official attached to his train, called Hurridass, the son of his father's

minister. They were both young men of promise and education, and, being almost of the same age and engaged in similar pursuits, they conceived a liking for each other, which soon ripened into friendship. They passed nearly the whole of their time together, and were never happy but in each other's society. The king found that this intimacy interfered with his arrangements for his son's future prospects in life, and he was therefore determined at all hazards to put an end to their intercourse if possible. He called Sewdass to him one day, and kindly said, 'My son, you have now nearly arrived at the age of discretion, and how is it that you spend so much of your valuable time, which should be more usefully and profitably engaged, in the company of my minister's son, in frivolous undertakings and unprofitable tasks? You can gain nothing by his conversation, for he is greatly your inferior. You might spend your time in laying up stores of knowledge, in the study of the various branches of science, and in the improvement of your mind, by preparing it for the duties you may be called upon to perform at a future period. Turn, then, my son, from the path you are now pursuing into that which must lead you to honour, fame, and renown.' Thus spoke the good king, but, alas! how short-lived was the impression of this fatherly admonition on the young prince! Not that he was totally devoid of feeling and respect for his royal parent, but his strong affection for the minister's son carried all before it, and would not admit of his giving him up altogether.

"The minister one day found the king in a very angry mood, and the latter, conscious of having been observed by the former, said to him, 'Vichakshun, you have come at a time when my wrath is greatly kindled. Know you not what my commands were touching the intimacy and friendship which exists between Prince Sewdass and your son? Have I not commanded that it should be discontinued? I now give you to understand that if you do not exert your influence to put an immediate stop to it, you will incur my

severe displeasure, and I shall be put to the disagreeable necessity of dealing with you and your son in a manner suited to the occasion, so as effectually to prevent the growing intimacy.' The minister was alarmed at the words of the king, and, falling on his knees before his sovereign, begged forgiveness for his son's temerity, and for his own seeming neglect. 'I assure your majesty,' said he, 'that I constantly pursue my son with threats and persuasions in order to prevent his intercourse with the prince, but he pays no attention to my repeated remonstrances. I shall now proceed to extremities, if nothing else can effect it.' He then bowed and retired.

"On the minister's return home, he summoned his son before him, and informed him of what the king had said. Hurridass seemed to regret very much that he had given so much offence to his majesty, and faithfully pledged his word never more to seek the prince. The next morning Hurridass received a message, as usual, from the prince, requesting him to attend upon him as speedily as possible, but Hurridass wrote back to the prince that he could not, after what had passed between the king and his father, again hazard an interview with him, as it would inevitably call down the ire as well of his father as of the king. He entered into a minute detail of all that had occurred, and of the subsequent injunctions which had been laid upon him, and concluded by begging the prince most earnestly to dispense with his company until the king should become more favorable to their intimacy. This reply caused the affectionate prince much pain and uneasiness. He never could have believed of his friend that he would consent to remain away from him on such a slight pretext, without even venturing to see him. He could but ill disguise the dissatisfaction he felt at his father's proceeding, and he resolved upon sending for his friend again, notwithstanding the king's prohibition. He accordingly sent another messenger, requesting Hurridass to come, if it were only to afford an opportunity for fuller explanation of the circumstances mentioned in his

note. The minister's son, however, was resolved upon not disobliging his father and the king. He refused, saying that he could not visit the prince after what had happened, nor would he on any account disobey the orders he had received. He desired the messenger to acquaint the prince with this determination on his part. Prince Sewdass was lost in amazement and grief, being ignorant of the best means to adopt in such a predicament. At last he resolved on calling upon Hurridass in person, and no sooner was this resolution formed than he hastened to put it into execution. He burst into Hurridass' room, and, half-choked with grief, in a tone of supplication conjured him, by all that was sacred in friendship, to acquaint him with the cause of so sudden a change in his demeanour towards him. 'If,' said the prince, 'it is on account of what my father has said, how foolish it is on your part to attach such weight and importance to his words! True enough, he has said that our intimacy must cease, but it was in a fit of passion; he surely could not have really meant it. I am sure he did not intend to separate us thus for ever. Dispel such scrupulosities, my dear Hurridass, and once more return to the arms of your friend—your brother.' 'Prince,' replied Hurridass, after having allowed his friend to give vent to his emotions, which could not but be flattering to him, as they supplied an additional proof, if one were wanted, of the sincerity and disinterestedness of the prince's friendship, 'Prince, the king your father has so willed it, and has repeatedly told my father so, there can therefore be no mistake. I cannot disobey my father's commands on any account, much as my heart is with you. Be generous, prince, and excuse me. I have sworn never again to be seen in your company unless your father (he alone can do it) absolves me from my oath by rescinding his orders. Besides, were I to act in opposition to the direct and oft-repeated injunctions of the king, it would only lead to the ruin, not alone of myself, but of my own parent, and would also, I fear, bring disgrace and opprobrium on you.

I regret the circumstances as much as you by any possibility can do, but what alternative have we? I trust, however, that you will, by the blessing of God, succeed in all your undertakings, and become prosperous, but it must be without me. I am not permitted to share in it. I beg, therefore, that you will not prolong the pain this interview brings with it, but leave me to brood over my misfortune, which is in itself sufficient, and almost more than I can bear, without witnessing your distress. Leave me, prince, I beseech you!' 'What means all this, Hurridass?' asked the prince; 'can it be that you have, without a struggle, at once resolved upon shutting me out from your heart? The difficulties that now surround us cannot but give way before our united efforts. Oh, recal then those cruel and unfeeling words of yours! Say that you will still be my friend,—that we shall again meet, though it may be at a distant time, more distant, perhaps, than my heart can be reconciled to, but let me still be sustained with the hope that the friendship—the brotherly love and affection—which I have lavished on you are not unrequited, and I will be content—at least I will strive to be so. But do not—oh, do not doom me to despair, by extinguishing the last faint gleam of hope!' 'Ah, prince! why do you thus distress yourself and me by struggling against fate? Destiny overrules all our inclinations, all our wishes, and, alas! all our hopes and aspirations! What I have said is not said of my own accord, but with the severest pang that my heart ever experienced. I say it because I know and am convinced that it must be so. Adieu, prince! may you soon regain your usual composure.' 'This day, then, shall be my last!' cried the prince with great vehemence, as Hurridass attempted to cut short the interview by withdrawing himself; 'and why delay when an opportunity is thus presented?' continued he distractedly, as, eyeing a sabre hanging on the wall, he rushed up to it, seized it in a determined manner, and attempted to bury the blade in his bosom. Hurridass, nimbly stepping up,

fortunately succeeded in arresting his uplifted arm. 'What deed of wickedness are you about to perpetrate?' demanded he; 'do you wish to hurry yourself into eternity with all your misdeeds and imperfections on your head? Is this the morality and wisdom which you have learnt from our holy religion? Do you not fear God? Desist, I pray you desist!' 'I fear God, and none else,' replied the now desperate prince; 'but as life has no longer any charms for me, what is left me but to die?' Hurridass replied, 'Do not rush headlong to destruction. Bide your time. He who lives in the fear of God, and places his dependence on Him, may rest in peace; no real evil can befal him. What may appear as trials to the short-sighted vision of man, are but blessings in disguise. Losses, disappointments, bereavements, and pains, ought each and all to be looked upon as corrections and admonitions dealt out by a fatherly hand, and therefore blessings. Let a man but have patience, and put his faith in the Almighty, and he will surmount all the difficulties that may present themselves to him. You must be aware of all this, my dear prince, and yet you are so rash and intemperate as to attempt to lay violent hands on yourself, and thus to sacrifice a life so precious as yours is to all—to me in particular! Alas! your rashness makes me relent: I cannot, considering the resolve that has now taken possession of your mind,—of putting an end to your existence if we do not continue our friendship,—hesitate a moment to do as you wish, though at a great and imminent personal hazard to myself. 'What!' exclaimed the wretched prince, 'do you hold out hopes for me?' 'I was going to say,' continued Hurridass, 'that I consider I should be endangering your life were I to refuse compliance with your wishes; I must therefore even swerve from my determination'—'And consent!' cried the prince. 'You have said it,' replied Hurridass; 'I must resolve on leaving my parents and home on your account. Let us not be rash, however, but give the subject a few hours' consideration.' 'Tush!' cried the

prince; 'no more evasion! You have consented to my proposals; and only on one condition do I return the sword to its place—that you do not go back from your word.' They then affectionately embraced each other, and mingled their tears, after which, lest they should be seen together by the minister, they retired to a secluded place for the purpose of deliberating on their future movements. After a few minutes spent in conversation, Hurridass said, 'Will you, my dear prince, allow me to make the first proposition? I feel convinced that it will meet your approval.' 'I shall, I am sure, have no voice apart from yours,' replied the prince; 'pray go on.' 'It is expedient,' continued Hurridass, 'that we forthwith leave this city, the scene of our happy childhood, and travel to some other clime more congenial to our present condition and circumstances, where we may uninterruptedly enjoy each other's society in peace and contentment, and thus ensure for ourselves that serenity of mind which is necessary for the devoting ourselves to the various branches of art and science. There, too, when not otherwise engaged, we can indulge ourselves in works of charity and benevolence—visit the saints, and give alms to the poor; and there we may, if God so wills it, die together, and let our dust be mingled within the small compass of one and the same grave. To remain here and continue our intimacy would be to bring ruin on ourselves: our fathers will most assuredly discard us, and perhaps do us some greater injury. What say you, my dear prince?' 'Be it so,' replied Sewdass; 'your counsel is good, and you have displayed your usual soundness of judgment in it. I also perceive, more than ever, the goodness of your heart and the sincerity of your kind regard for me.' Having thus determined on leaving the city together, they retired to make the necessary preparations, promising to meet the next day at a certain time and place which had been agreed upon between them. They hastily provided themselves with some money and other necessaries essential for the journey, and at the appointed hour the youths met at

the rendezvous, whence, after a cordial greeting, they set forth, without making any one a party to their design.

"On the day of their departure, the king arose at his usual hour, and, having bathed himself, as was his custom, proceeded to the apartment allotted to the purpose of meditation, there to pour forth his thanks to his beneficent Creator. In his prayers he did not omit his son Sewdass, on whom he called down the blessings of heaven, little dreaming that he had rebelled against him, and was at that moment far from his birth-place and anxious parent, without having given him the slightest notice or intimation of his intention. The king, having ended his devotions, employed the intermediate time till noon in his court. After the labours of the day were over, he retired to take his usual meal, and was surprised at not finding his son in his customary place, as he had hitherto never failed to be present. He sent a messenger to the minister's house to see if he was there with Hurridass, but no—he was not there. The king then ordered him to be sought for in all the places where he thought he was likely to be, yet he was not found. King Rutnamanee on this became agitated and alarmed, especially when he heard that the minister was also engaged, with equally bad success, in searching for *his* son. He immediately ordered the different parts of the city to be searched closely, as well as the roads leading from it: but the youths, having had a good many hours' start, were out of reach, and jogging along quite pleasantly, without interruption. The minister also, as has been said, was looking everywhere for his son, and loudly deploring his absence; and on his servants informing him that he had not been seen since the previous night, no doubt was left on the anxious father's mind that Sewdass and Hurridass had left the city together. He immediately presented himself before the king, and communicated his suspicions. The latter was sorely grieved at the turn affairs had thus unexpectedly taken, and asked the minister of he had not been cognisant of the intended departure of the two youths, and if so, why.

he had not taken the necessary precautions to prevent their carrying it out. The minister said that he knew nothing of it till the moment of his majesty's sending a messenger for the prince. The king then asked whether his orders regarding his son had been communicated to the youth. 'May it please your majesty,' said the minister, 'I distinctly informed my son of the instructions I had received from your majesty, and told him in addition that if he disregarded the matter, not only would he himself be a sufferer, but likewise I, his father. My son promised to obey me; but upon enquiry, I understand that yesterday morning the Prince Sewdass sent a messenger to request my son to wait upon him, but he returned a direct refusal, whereupon a second messenger came with a like message, and succeeded no better than the first. The prince, however, being bent upon having an interview, came in person the third time, and burst into my son's apartment. They then conversed for some time, were afterwards seen to retire to a secluded place, and have not since been seen or heard of. It is to be presumed that as your majesty was pleased to lay them under some restraint regarding their frequent meetings and growing intimacy, they have evaded your majesty's control, in order that they may give free scope to their inclinations. Such being the case, I would take the liberty of suggesting to your majesty the propriety of setting some portion of the troops in motion. Let them be sent out to the several neighbouring provinces, with instructions to scour the country far and wide.' The king immediately acted on the minister's suggestion, and despatched numerous horsemen in all directions. The greatest exertions were made by them, but all without avail: they were fain to return, after a fruitless search. The king was grieved to learn that no trace of them could be found; and the minister and his family were also thrown into deep distress. His majesty again summoned his minister, and had another consultation with him, but neither of them could suggest a plan likely to result in the capture of the runaways. They became now

thoroughly convinced that the king's commands were the sole cause of the step the youths had taken; and they even went the length of surmising that the young men might, in a fit of desperation, have put an end to their lives. This affected them more seriously than ever, and made the two fathers wretched indeed. The minister, however, hoped for the best; and on his observing the king weighed down by this last idea, he tried to rouse him from his lethargic state of distress by exhorting him not to allow such sad speculations to dwell on his mind. He counselled him to look to God for the restoration of the prince, as he (the minister) did for the recovery of his own son. He besought him not to despair, for that all would yet be well. 'Come what will,' said Vichakshun in conclusion, 'it is the duty of every good man to bow with meek submission to the will of Him who does everything for the best, and who is ever ready to listen to the prayers and supplications of his creatures.' These words from the minister, who was a truly good and wise man, greatly encouraged the king, who became calmer, and at length determined to leave the issue to God, who alone could help him out of the anguish into which the loss of his only son—the heir to his throne, and the prop of his old age—had plunged him. The minister, finding the king's usual composure somewhat restored, retired from his presence.

"We must now see what has become of Prince Sewdass and his companion and bosom-friend Hurridass. As they prosecuted their journey, they frequently thought and talked of their parents, and pictured vividly to themselves the distress and sorrow which they would feel when their flight became known. Thus they went on through many a town and village, across rivers and streams, over steep and rugged mountains. They did not in their travels ignore the promptings of their generous and benevolent dispositions, but visited the huts of the poor, and administered such comfort as they could. They also entered, on their way, the several temples and places of worship, and performed

appropriate devotions. Having one day travelled a long stage, they rested for awhile, during which time they noticed at a distance a large lake, and on its bank a small hut of peculiar construction, which excited their curiosity, and they determined to visit it. Accordingly, they drew near to it, and found that it was inhabited by an old hermit, who had lived in that spot for a period of twelve years. He was a venerable and devout-looking personage, and when they entered he was just in the act of rising from his devotions. They prostrated themselves at his feet, and besought his benediction, which having bestowed, he raised them from their humble posture and bade them be seated. He enquired after their health, where they came from, and their object in travelling towards such a retired spot. The two youths did not hesitate to make themselves known, and the reason which had led them to leave their respective homes. The hermit listened to their story very attentively, and finding that one of his visitors was the son of the king of Rutnapoory, he wished to be informed if he could be of any service to a person of so noble and exalted a rank, and in what manner he could accommodate him. They told him that all they required of him was, to be allowed to take up their residence with him for four months, until the rainy season should cease, and that they would then cease to incommode him, by resuming their travels. The hermit at once gladly consented, and assured them that, as far as it lay in his power, nothing should be wanting to make them comfortable. He then conducted them into an inner room, and having spread food before them, he retired, and left them to refresh themselves after their journey. He also had their horses well fed, watered, and housed. During their stay with the hermit their time was well employed. He was frequently visited by devout and religious men from all quarters, from whose conversation they derived substantial instruction. He himself, being a man of learning, often spent some hours with them, and greatly assisted them in their studies.

"At length the four months of their sojourn were fast

drawing to a close, and the two youths regretted, as did the hermit, their approaching separation. The day, however, arrived on which they were to part, perhaps never more to meet, and the old man was as much affected as were his youthful friends. He gave them every needful direction regarding the road they were to take. At the distance of about twenty-four *yojuns* from the hermit's dwelling there were two roads—one to the left and one to the right. He advised them to follow the one to the right, the other being difficult and hazardous. The one he advised them to take he said they would find easy and safe, and on it they would meet with every accommodation for travellers and strangers, which was not the case with the other. On leaving, the hermit presented the prince with a small sword, telling him that if it should at any time be put into the fire until it became red-hot, he would certainly be in imminent danger, unless somebody should cool it; for that, although he might have it within his grasp, some enemy would rush upon him, overpower him, and finally prove victorious. 'Remember,' said the hermit, by way of concluding his observations, 'Remember, these are my last words!' He then bestowed his parting blessing upon them, and they in return paid him much reverence. Having gratefully acknowledged his kindness, and rendered suitable thanks, expressing at the same time their regret that they had not the means of making him a more substantial return, they proceeded on their journey.

"In a few days they came to the spot where the two roads the hermit had alluded to branched off in opposite directions. Here they laid themselves down under a shady tree, to refresh themselves before they proceeded any further on their way. After awhile, the prince proposed that they should take the road to the left, but his companion did not agree to it, and reminded him of the caution they had received from the hermit. The prince was obstinate. 'I would know,' said he, 'what perils and difficulties are to be encountered upon it, and when once satisfied on that point,

we will return, if you wish it, and take the other road. I fear no danger, but with the hermit's blessing I feel myself equal to anything. Be of good cheer, friend Hurridass, and let us at once go forward.' Hurridass tried to dissuade the prince, but it was in vain, and it was therefore finally resolved to follow the prince's proposition, though only with the passive consent of the minister's son.

"They had not proceeded far when they came to an immense and dark forest, where numberless trees of gigantic growth raised their towering heads to the skies; birds of various shapes, colours, and species, were perched thereon; the wild roarings of the forest denizens, inspiring terror at every step, were occasionally heard; whilst venemous reptiles met the eye in every direction. No human being could be discerned save the two youths. They made all speed to pass this forest ere the clouds of night should overtake them, and they shortly after arrived at a desert, which having crossed, they beheld, with extreme astonishment, a huge giant, of frightful appearance and most ferocious countenance, seated at the foot of a rock. They gazed on a figure of such unusual proportions with feelings of the most profound awe. His large and fiery eyes were fiercely rolling, his tongue protruded, and a tusk, like that of a boar, was visible on either side of his immense mouth. His nostrils emitted the most noxious effluvia, and his saliva streamed down his chin. His ears were like two flapping wings, and he presented altogether a most hideous and fiendish appearance. The two youths thought to escape his notice, but the monster, observing them, walked up, and in a voice of thunder bade them stop, adding that he was lucky in obtaining so unusually good and plentiful a meal, and that he would not on any account allow himself to be baulked of it, as he was voraciously hungry. He then eyed them separately, as if debating within himself which of them he should first devour, when the prince, addressing him in a firm and resolute manner, said, 'What mean you, wretch? Think you we will permit you to feed upon us,

mighty as you appear to be, and as you no doubt think yourself? Attempt to approach but another step, and you will find out your mistake.' At these words from the prince, the giant became much enraged, and, gnashing his teeth in fury, at once advanced, with a view of putting his threat into execution, on which the prince nimbly stepped back, and, drawing his sword, inflicted a heavy blow on the monster's leg, which made him fall to the ground with a tremendous crash. He was severely wounded, and soon fainted from loss of blood. Recovering his senses, however, in a short time, the pain from his wound caused him to utter shriek after shriek, which resounded throughout the forest. He then rose from the ground, and, foaming with rage, stood throwing large stones at the prince, who broke them in pieces with his sword. The giant, while considering what he should next do, made another effort to reach the prince, but his foot slipped in the attempt, and he fell once more to the ground. The prince, now finding that the giant experienced some difficulty in rising, thought it prudent to wait no longer, but to ensure his own safety and that of his companion by taking the life of the giant. He stepped up to him accordingly, and buried his sword to the hilt in his body. This, however, did not kill him at once; and, whilst yet struggling in the grasp of death, he raked together a quantity of stones, and threw them with such violence and precision at the prince, that the latter with great difficulty managed to avoid them. At last the monster began to grow faint: he rolled over as he lay, and never stirred more, for just then Sewdass again approached him and stabbed him to the heart, when he immediately expired.

"While the prince was thus engaged, his friend Hurridass, who took no part whatever in the combat with the giant, was engaged at a short distance in supplicating the aid of heaven for success to his friend the prince, on whose courage and skill their lives depended. He was yet in prayer, when he heard a voice exclaiming—'Victory!

victory ! victory ! to the brave Prince Sewdass and his companion Hurridass !'

"The giant, a short time previously, had brought from the city of Single Dwip* a lady of noble birth and extreme beauty, who, on hearing the strange noise of the combat, and the terrific shrieking of the giant, had ventured from her rocky dwelling to ascertain the cause. She was greatly alarmed at witnessing the sanguinary battle which was taking place, but she privately and earnestly prayed to the Supreme Being that the charming prince might prove the victor, and she shortly had the gratification of seeing the ruthless tyrant expire. As soon as the victory was decided, Hurridass hastened to meet the prince, and, after mutual congratulations, they embraced each other, thanking God for their safe deliverance. In the mean time the prince had descried the lady above alluded to, and became smitten with her beauty, she herself being not untouched by the prince's manly appearance and handsome proportions. The prince was so struck with the sight of such unequalled and surpassing beauty, that he would have fallen to the ground in a swoon, had not Hurridass supported him. This sudden effect on the nerves of the prince agitated his friend greatly, and he began to fear that it was perhaps the result of their disobedience to their parents, for he concluded it was the effect of the encounter with the giant. Hurridass busied himself in endeavouring to revive the prince by fanning his face with the skirt of his garment, and having at last succeeded in his efforts, he besought him to compose himself, and advised him at once to leave the scene of blood. 'Hurridass !' cried the prince, 'I cannot believe that I am the same man I was but a moment since ! My heart has received a wound—such a wound as I cannot well describe ! I am bewildered !—What ails me ?—Oh, this wound !' and he swooned away a second time. Hurridass could not comprehend all this, and when the prince came to himself again, he asked him what was the matter,—

* The island of Ceylon.

whether he had been wounded by his adversary the giant, or whether he was suffering from any other cause, as yet unknown to him. 'Ah! my good Hurridass,' said the prince, 'did you but know what I feel—the anguish I now endure—you would indeed pity me. Look yonder, friend,' continued he, pointing to the lady, who was now nearly abreast of them, 'look yonder, and you will discern the object which causes me so much pain and anguish of mind.' Hurridass looked round, and perceived an incomparably beautiful lady, stretched on the ground in the same helpless condition as that from which the prince had just recovered. The mystery was at once cleared up,—Hurridass knew what troubled his companion Sewdass so much. 'Prince,' said he, 'my dear and tried friend!—restrain your passion, and be of good cheer! You will soon, I feel certain, be master of the object which seems to have so suddenly and powerfully affected you.' 'Did you see that beautiful form—that angelic creature?' enquired the prince; 'where, oh where is she?—whither has she gone?' A dizziness here came over the prince, and he seemed to lose sight of her. 'Seek for her, dear Hurridass, and bring her hither, I beseech you!' These and other hasty expressions escaped from him, which greatly alarmed his friend and companion, who began to think that he was not in his right senses. At last the prince spoke more sensibly, and, rising from the ground, he accompanied Hurridass to the spot where the idol of his heart still lay. They were exceedingly alarmed to find her insensible, the violence of her passion for the prince having had the same effect upon her as it had upon him. Seeing the deplorable condition she was in, Sewdass was moved to tears, and groaned piteously. 'Wipe away those tears, which so ill become a man,' said Hurridass; 'why are you so weak as to allow yourself to be thus agitated? Compose yourself, and I will endeavour to bring the lady to life, and also try to ascertain the true cause of her indisposition.' The prince strived to subdue his grief, and besought Hurridass to assist the lady—to bring some

water to bathe her temples—and to ascertain if possible who and what she was, and where she had come from. Hurridass immediately set about executing the prince's orders: he advanced nearer to the lady, to do which he had to enter the rent in the rock which led to the giant's dwelling. What was his surprise when, instead of a gloomy cavern, he found himself at the entrance of a spacious hall, splendidly furnished, and showing every sign of having been in the occupation of persons of taste and refinement! Thither he carried the still insensible lady, and beckoned the prince to follow. The cave was evidently the work of man: it was in the form of a vault, the light being obtained through an aperture in the cavity on the opposite side of the entrance. Hurridass went further in, and seeing a basin of solid gold on a stool, he filled it with water from a spring in the rock, and sprinkled the face of the lady, after which he bathed her temples. She slowly recovered, and, on looking about her, gazed fixedly at the prince; then, turning to Hurridass, she expressed her thanks to him in the most flattering terms. 'I do not know how to thank you,' said she; 'I am under great obligation to you and to your brave companion. But for you, I fear I should never have been restored to consciousness. I shall not, I trust, prove ungrateful.' Hurridass replied by a low bow, and begged to be informed how he could be of further service to her. She thanked him anew, and invited him and the prince to an inner apartment, where she soon had a sumptuous repast laid before them, of which they heartily partook. The lady then entered into conversation with them, enquiring as to their journey—whence they had come, and by what singular chance they had arrived at that place,—'for,' continued she, 'since I have lived here I have not once until to-day beheld a human face!' The sweet tone in which she spoke, and her polite manners, were not lost on the prince or his companion. The latter said, 'Oh, princess!—rare and unequalled being!—before I proceed to answer your enquiries, give me leave to express the satisfaction we

both feel—myself and the companion of my travels, my bosom friend—at this unexpected and delightful interview with you. We trust it may tend to secure your happiness, and that of your humble servants now before you.' He then entered into a brief history of himself and the prince, and communicated all that it was desirable to do. The princess, after hearing the whole, addressed them thus:—'Prince Sewdass, and you, good Hurridass, behold before you an unfortunate virgin, the offspring of noble parents, who are at present residing toward the south, at a place called Single Dwip. I am called Moheeny. The giant you have slain decoyed me from home, and then forcibly conveyed me hither. I fainted as he carried me away in his monstrous and fiendish arms, and when I came to my senses I found myself incarcerated in this dreary cavern. To add to my grief, the monster endeavoured by every means to make me love him. I have been here for some days, and as I constantly remained in my own apartment of the cave, he never once asked me to share his bed. How lucky for me has it proved that you chanced to journey this way, and have thus been the means of saving me from ruin and death! I was suddenly awakened, during the encounter of the prince with the giant, by a loud shriek, which filled me with great fear. I sallied forth from my apartment, and, from the summit of the rock, witnessed the combat. The joy I experienced at the fall of the giant I cannot well express.' Saying this, she advanced towards the prince, and threw herself at his feet, but he raised her again immediately. She then approached Hurridass with the same intention, but he begged her to forbear. Both the prince and Hurridass were deeply moved at the recital of her tale: while they admired her beauty and accomplishments, they pitied her cruel fate.

"Things were not, however, to remain thus long. She felt that she could no longer smother her passion for the prince. It must be divulged. She could not refrain from commending his valour, and extolling him above all the

heroes of his age. He, on his part, became more and more enamoured of the lovely girl : not only did her personal charms captivate him, but her mental acquirements were also of the highest order. The prince went out for awhile, and Moheeny availed herself of the opportunity to declare her passion for him to Hurridass. 'Oh!' said she, 'how happy should I be could I but continually be with him! It was my sudden and irresistible passion for him which reduced me to the condition in which you found me. I belong to a country very remote from this, and it would be an abuse of his goodness to ask him to travel thither; neither is it my wish to do so. I have made up my mind never more to visit it. If the prince will agree to live with me here, nothing shall be wanting on my part to render his stay comfortable, and suitable to his rank and position ; and, should he hereafter wish it, I shall be prepared to set out with him to the uttermost corner of the earth!' She concluded by requesting Hurridass to intercede for her with the prince, in order that their union might be confirmed and their nuptials celebrated by himself. All this the latter communicated to Sewdass on his return, who, not a little elated, gave a joyful consent. The rite of Gundhervivahu* was accordingly performed by Hurridass the very next day, and Moheeny became the wife of Sewdass. The following morning they all three met together, and were greatly delighted at the aspect of affairs.

"Soon after these events, Hurridass expressed a desire that their travels might be resumed, and he entreated the prince to accompany him by the right-hand road, as advised by the hermit. Sewdass begged to be excused, as his health, he said, would not permit him to undertake so long a journey. Hurridass, however, concluded that he was too much taken up with his beautiful partner to be persuaded to leave her; he therefore resolved upon prosecuting the journey alone. The prince regretted much that his friend

* Marriage by mutual consent of the parties, without reference to parents or others.

and fellow-traveller should proceed without him, but he was still more disinclined to part from his wife; they had no alternative, therefore, but to separate. The prince embraced Hurridass, and begged him to visit them without fail within four months, which Hurridass promised to do; and at length, having partaken of a hasty repast, he saddled his horse and departed, amidst many expressions of kindness and solicitude from his friends. The prince continued to live in the cavern with his wife Moheeny.

CHAPTER X.

Continuation of Veytal's tale.

"HURRIDASS, while jogging along, remembered the admonition of his tutor, and prayed to the Almighty to guide him safely through his journey, and enable him to fulfil the command given him. He crossed the desert without mishap, and was pleased when he beheld the tree at the junction of the two roads, under which he had sat with his companion. He rested there awhile, and then again set out. Having travelled about thirty-two *yójuns*, he arrived at a meadow, in the centre of which he perceived a beautiful lake, and on its bank a small thatched hut. He went up to it, to ascertain whether any one resided there, and was agreeably surprised to find a venerable hermit seated within. Hurridass entered, and, prostrating himself at the feet of the holy man, received his benediction. The hermit then enquired whence he had come, and what was his mission. Hurridass satisfied him on these points, and told him even of the prince and his habitation.

"The hermit was very learned, and a profound thinker, —well acquainted with all the arts and sciences; he was also a mild, temperate, and cheerful companion. He seemed exceedingly pleased with the concluding portion of Hurridass' narrative, and greatly commended him for having never once lost sight of his tutor's injunction. 'Hurridass,' said the hermit, 'there are but few who will willingly undergo such toils and inconveniences for the sake of obeying their tutors: he who does so, not only pleases the instructor, but the Almighty also.' After this, the hermit said he might remain with him as long as he pleased or wished, assuring him that he would make him as comfortable as possible, and teach him some curious and sacred

arts, as well as some rare and wonderful charms, such as were known but to few human beings. Hurridass prostrated himself a second time, and renewed his thanks; he then decided on taking up his residence for a time with the hermit.

"Let us now see how Prince Sewdass fared with his beloved Moheeny. He was in the enjoyment of ease and happiness, there being nothing wanting to render a reasonable mind contented and peaceful. The giant had hoarded up plenty of provisions and other needful articles, for the use of Moheeny, before he brought her to the cavern; and there was a deep river, full of fish, on the side of the mountain, close to the cavern. One day the prince and Moheeny took a walk together towards this river, and they sat down on its bank to watch the various fishes sporting before them. It was indeed a quiet and delicious retreat. As they sat thus, a sudden movement, as of contention, was observable among the fish. The prince had, in an affectionate manner, wound his arm round the princess' neck, which caused the centre diamond of her necklace, which was of extraordinary size and brilliancy, to drop into the river, and it was immediately swallowed by one of the fish. The prince grieved at the loss of the diamond, and for a time sat without uttering a word. So sat the princess also,—not in anger, but in grief. They retired to their dwelling with heavy hearts, and Sewdass, observing that the princess appeared unusually out of sorts, which he attributed to the irritation she felt at her loss, said to her, 'I pray you, let me know the value of the diamond, and I will endeavour to replace it.' Moheeny hung down her head, but did not speak a word in reply, so deeply absorbed was her mind. The prince continued,—'If a man be once dead, he will never again return to life: his wife and children may lament him as much as they please, and even sacrifice their own lives, in vain. Should an article of small size be dropped into the ocean, it would be useless seeking for it there. The pleasure we derive from any one source has its

limit: we should not look beyond it, for if we lose it once, it cannot be regained. Listen to me, dear love,' added the prince, 'to eat whilst walking, to laugh whilst talking, to be jealous of others' prospects, to regret losses, to recal the past, to interrupt the conversation of others, and to be eavesdropping, are unmistakeable signs of a perverted understanding. Do not, therefore, my dear Moheeny, grieve for the loss of the precious stone, but try to calm yourself.' These words, spoken in the most endearing tone, helped to clear away the mist of regret that clouded Moheeny's mind, and to restore her to her usual serenity and liveliness. It will be here necessary to make a short digression.

"To the northward, about forty-seven *yojuns* from the cave, there was a city called Hempoory, the ruling monarch of which was named Kankameroo. The city covered an extent of some seven *yojuns*, and was densely populated. It pleased the Almighty to cause a great scarcity of water in the dominions of this king, the largest ponds, wells, lakes, and rivers being dried up; the people were consequently obliged to quit their respective localities, and take up their residence in places where a sufficiency of this necessary of life was likely to be met with. In this city also lived a poor and destitute fisherman, with a large family wholly depending on his unaided exertions. This family, as may be imagined, was reduced to the most painful stage of distress by the dearth of water,—in reality they were but eking out a wretched and miserable existence. The fisherman happened on one occasion, in pursuit of his calling, to come to that part of the river where the diamond had been dropped by Prince Sewdass. Finding the river well stocked with fish, he thanked God for directing his steps to the spot, and then cast in his net. When he drew it up, he found it well filled, so he cast it a second time, and was favored with another large draught of fish, among which he found one far excelling the others in beauty and brilliancy,—in fact he had never before seen one to be

compared to it. This was the fish which had swallowed the diamond. Having admired it for some time, he deposited it, with the others, in two baskets, which he slung across his shoulder, and in this way he went home. He gave the finest fish to his wife, to be dressed for his dinner, asking her to have it ready by the time he returned from the market. The fisherman's wife, on opening the belly of the fish, found therein the rich diamond, set in gold. Its brightness dazzled her eyes, and shone through every crevice in the humble dwelling. The woman had had some experience in things of this sort, she therefore wrapped up the jewel in a piece of cloth the instant she found it, lest some one should see it and deprive her of the treasure. She was quite elated with the prize; and, as she hastily set about preparing her husband's dinner, she felt impatient to impart the joyful tidings to him. When the fisherman returned from the market, his wife placed his meal before him, and being hungry, not having had a good dinner for the previous four or five days, he fell to heartily. When he had appeased his hunger, his wife told him of the diamond she had found, and he desired her to produce it. As soon as he saw it, he was struck with amazement at its brilliancy and evident value, and could not help giving utterance to an exclamation of joy at the sight of the unexpected wealth before him, which would render him rich and independent for the remainder of his life. He knew pretty well the value of the diamond, and he cautioned his wife not to tell any one of their good luck. 'God has so bountifully provided for us,' said he, 'in consideration, doubtless, of the continued distresses to which we have been subject.' He told his wife he would take the diamond to the king of the city, who, being a worthy and good man, would no doubt reward him liberally. Accordingly, having clad himself in mean apparel, he placed the diamond in a common plate, and took it to the palace, where, on presenting himself, he was asked by one of the attendants what he wanted. He said he had brought a certain article for his majesty, and

begged to be allowed an interview. The attendant reported the matter to the king, who was pleased to grant the request of the poor fisherman. The attendant led the way into an inner apartment, and he followed. Being come before the king, the fisherman respectfully saluted his majesty, who asked him what he had brought. 'May it please your majesty,' said the wily fisherman, 'I am an inhabitant of this city, where, by severe losses and misfortunes, I have been reduced to the greatest straits. I have been compelled to part with every valuable article that was bequeathed to me by my ancestors, to provide food for myself and family. This diamond (at the same time presenting the plate to his majesty) is all I have now left. I thought it best to show it to your majesty before I offered it for sale elsewhere.' The diamond was one of a rare kind and of great size: it shone like a bright meteor, dazzling all who beheld it. The king was himself no less surprised than the rest. After admiring it for awhile, he took it in his hand, and, in a transport of joy, exclaimed, 'You a poor man!—even I, who am a king, and the possessor of many jewels, have never yet seen a stone of such beauty and dazzling brightness.' The king sent for his jewellers to value it, and they too were amazed at the beauty and size of the precious stone. After turning it over and examining it for a long time, they pronounced the diamond *invaluable*. The king immediately ordered his treasurer to give the owner of the diamond as much money as he should require, and to preserve the stone in his royal treasury; in short, he became the purchaser.

"As the king handed it to the treasurer, he observed that the stone was set in gold, and had evidently formed part of a lady's neck ornament. He concluded, too, that the person who had worn it must have been a creature of rare perfection and beauty. This idea worked in his mind to such a degree, that he called his prime minister, and made him acquainted with the fact of his being desperately enamoured of this unknown lady; ordering him, at the same time, to

procure this Pudmini* for him. The minister was astounded at this unreasonable demand; his duty, however, was to obey; so he despatched couriers in different directions, to seek for information, with instructions that if they found a person answering the description given them, to bring her without delay to court. The minister himself proceeded to an island called Jumboo-Dweep,† where a woman was said to have been seen of such beauty and qualifications as to entitle her to the designation of Pudmini,—at least so the minister was informed. He searched for her, however, in vain. After his fruitless search he returned to the city, as did also the couriers from the other quarters. The king was much grieved to learn the unsuccessful termination of his minister's journey, which only added to his passion, instead of in any way tending to lessen it. His malady increased to such an extent that he abstained almost altogether from food and rest. The minister was the only person who during this period conducted the business of the state; and though he was just and forbearing, yet the people began to show signs of dissatisfaction at the continued absence of the king for no other reason than that he was indulging in a morbid passion for an unknown person.

"Things were in this state when a widow named Shambae, who was cook to the royal household, hearing of his majesty's indisposition, presented herself before him, saying, 'May it please your majesty, I think I can find a way to cure you, if you will let me know the cause of your indisposition,—how your majesty has become so stricken, and what has made this strong impression upon you.' The king gave her a particular account of all that had occurred to him relative to the diamond he had purchased a short time ago from, as he thought, a citizen in reduced circum-

* The first of the four classes into which women are said to be divided.

† The central division of the world; according to some, India.

stances. The widow possessed a depth of knowledge and cunning worthy of a statesman, and though she was struck dumb with surprise for awhile at the monarch's whim, she requested him to point out the individual from whom he had purchased the diamond, saying that she would try to bring about the wishes of the king. The fisherman was immediately brought before Shambae, who ordered him on pain of death to inform her truly from whence he had procured the diamond. He replied, with much trepidation, that if she would be pleased first to assure him of his majesty's pardon for the deception he had practised, he would reveal the truth. 'Well,' replied Shambae, 'I will secure for you his majesty's pardon, be the circumstances what they may. Speak fearlessly.' The fisherman then told her his adventure, exactly as it had occurred, and what his profession really was, renewing at the conclusion his solicitation for the king's clemency. Shambae made him wait until she returned from the king, to whom she hastened, and represented the case, saying that the person whom his majesty had taken for an impoverished citizen was a fisherman, and assuring his majesty that he need not be under any apprehension, for that, if he would rely on her, and have patience for a few days, she would, by employing her utmost zeal in his service, afford him the pleasure, and that very soon, of possessing the object of his love and admiration. She then set out, accompanied by the fisherman, in search of the place where the fish containing the diamond had been caught. The fisherman guided her to the spot: it was a beautiful and charming locality, and the pellucid stream flowing tranquilly along added to the charms of the scene. Shambae bade the fisherman leave her, after he had shown her the exact spot, and while revolving in her mind what plan to adopt, she happened to cast her eye on the traces of footsteps on the pathway along which Prince Sewdass and the lady of the cave had but a short time before walked. She followed up these footmarks until she came to the entrance of the cave, which was not very far from

the river. Shambae entered, with great hesitation, and was surprised to find herself in a most delightful and spacious hall. She advanced a little further, and beheld the beautiful Moheeny seated on a couch, with the prince reclining negligently by her side. Shambae stood rooted to the spot, as if spell-bound at so much beauty and perfection. She dared not and could not advance further, so she made signs to Moheeny to approach. Moheeny was astonished also, but her astonishment arose from a different cause to that of the intruder: she thought only of the audacity of the woman in venturing at once into the cave, without leave or warning. Then again she thought it might be some unfortunate woman who had been bereft of all she possessed by some of the prowlers of the forest, and who now sought her help and protection. As this idea crossed her mind, she rose from her seat and approached the widow, saying, 'Well, what is your business in this place?' Shambae threw herself at the feet of the beauteous lady, and, in the most piteous and mournful tone, replied, 'Have pity, oh, lady!—my good angel, and goddess of beauty! I am a poor helpless widow: God has left me neither son nor daughter to be the prop of my old age, which is the cause of my having determined on seeking for death in this wild and desolate place, and thus find relief from the cruel grief which now rends my heart! I thought and believed I should meet with no human being here, but God has providentially directed me to this secluded dwelling. I am glad indeed that I should have the good fortune to come into the presence of so noble and handsome a lady. I humbly ask you to keep me in your service. I can cook well, and perform every domestic duty.' During this address Shambae made a great show of grief, and shed an abundance of tears. All this seemed very extraordinary to Moheeny, though she pitied greatly the distressed object before her. She told her, however, that the prince her husband was then asleep, but as soon as he awoke she would ask his permission to keep her in her service. The prince awoke

shortly after, and Moheeny then begged him to consent to her employing the widow, who seemed altogether destitute. 'Consider,' replied the prince, 'we are quite happy in our secluded home. This woman may perhaps have come here with no good intention; if so, we shall have to regret what you now propose doing,—it may be productive of injury to us. People are not all so virtuous and good as they themselves would fain appear, and therefore cannot always be expected to speak the truth. We are here living in content and happiness, and I see no necessity for this woman's being retained in our service. Take my advice,—do not engage her. If you do, I feel a presentiment that some harm will befal us, which may not then be remediable.' The princess, nevertheless, was so urgent in her entreaties that the prince was compelled to yield, though much against his will, and the widow's services were retained. Shambae was questioned as to her knowledge of cooking, and other domestic work, and her answers were satisfactory. On discovering the aversion of the prince to her, the widow conceived a great and bitter hatred against him, which, however, she concealed in such a manner that it was not discovered until too late.

"One whole month rolled away without anything unusual occurring to disturb the tranquillity of that peaceful home. During this time Shambae diverted her new mistress with interesting tales and witty anecdotes. In this way she so ingratiated herself into her favor, that the indiscreet but candid Moheeny related to her the little history of her meeting with the prince, and of the extent and sincerity of their love. This was what Shambae longed to know, and she now found how she could most easily and effectually injure the prince. Shambae had, previous to her departure from the palace, procured some poisonous ingredients of great strength, and she was not long in finding an opportunity to execute her vile and atrocious purpose. She one day poisoned the prince's food, and, owing to the peculiar flavour of the ingredient used, which, as a matter

of course, was imparted to the food with which it was mixed, the prince partook of his dinner with more than his usual appetite; but, strange to say, it had no effect beyond that of intoxicating him. Now, the prince's Gooru had instructed him how, by holding the little sword which had been given him in a peculiar manner, and by pronouncing certain mystical words, to counteract the effect of any injury which might be attempted against him. Finding himself, therefore, unusually affected in the head, he had recourse to the sword, and became in a moment perfectly restored. The widow, who had calculated upon the death of the prince, was not a little surprised to find him alive and in his usual health, after the time allowed for the operation of the drug she had given him had elapsed. She was lost in astonished conjecture, and could not understand how the prince had escaped the effect of the potent poison.

"Baulked in this her first attempt, Shambae redoubled her efforts to remove the object of her hatred, who was also the only obstacle to the success of her great project. She had another plan in her head, and she proceeded to carry it out. One day, being alone with Moheeny, she addressed her thus:—'I have something to communicate to you, good lady, which it concerns you much to know, and is of the utmost importance to you.' The princess asked her, with a smile, what it was. 'It is this, dear lady,' said she; 'you fancy, do you not, that your husband loves you with as much sincerity and truth as you love him?' The happy Moheeny replied, 'Yes; what doubt can there be of it? He loves me tenderly, and gives me every day fresh proofs of his regard.' '*I* don't, however, believe it,' said the wily Shambae; 'you know—or if you do not, you ought to—that men are generally more faithless and hard-hearted than those of our sex. I therefore advise you to try his love. If you think he is not jealous and suspicious of you, ask him to-night, when you find him in good humour, this question, ridiculous though it may seem, and you will soon be undeceived,—"Pray, when and how will you die?"

If he tells you that he loves you with all his soul, you may be assured he is not to be believed; the true sign of affection is when the wife can without hesitation say whether or not her husband's love is exclusively hers. I hope you will obtain an answer on this subject from the prince, and that it may not be accompanied by some unfeeling threat.' Moheeny asked Shambae how she could propose that such a ridiculous and unfeeling question should be put to the prince. 'I know,' continued she, 'that my husband will not refuse to reveal any secret to me, if I request him to do so. No; I am sure he will tell me without a moment's hesitation.' Shambae, after this conversation, busied herself with her usual occupation, and set about preparing the evening meal. When it was ready, Moheeny and the prince partook of it, after which they retired for the night.

"Shortly after their retirement, Moheeny, addressing the prince, said, 'Dear Sewdass, I have a request to make of you, and I conjure you to answer me. If you have the same love for me as I have for you, you will not hesitate to comply with my desire. You are a prince by birth, and I have been an eye-witness to your valour and bravery, which——' Here the prince interrupted her before she had time to finish the sentence, and said, 'Do not lengthen your discourse, my love, but tell me at once what it is you desire.' Moheeny eagerly said, 'I wish to be informed what death you will die, and what circumstances will attend your dissolution.' The prince heard her with feelings of horror and disgust, and was enraged to such a degree that, falling back in his bed against a cushion which supported him, he addressed Moheeny in an indignant and scornful tone. 'I all along thought,' said he, 'that you were a woman of sense and discretion, but what you have now presumed to ask convinces me that I have been wrong in my calculation of your worth and merit. Tell me, I beseech you, what could have induced you to put such a question to me? You must be aware that such a proceeding on your part can only tend to lessen my esteem for you. I adviso

you from this day never again to allude to the subject, lest I be tempted to punish you for it. I am not allowed by my preceptor, on pain of death, to impart to any one the secret you wish me to reveal.' Moheeny was struck dumb at this affronting answer. She experienced great difficulty in appeasing the anger of her lord, which, however, she at last in a great measure succeeded in effecting.

"In the morning, Moheeny told Shambae that her husband had not deigned to reveal the secret to her, as he could not do it without subjecting himself to certain death. The widow replied, 'Did not you, princess, boast to me of your exclusive control over the prince?—that he loves you as never man before loved, and that he would refuse you nothing? It is therefore surprising to me that you did not persist longer, in order to satisfy yourself on the subject I alluded to. You see what hard-hearted creatures men are! Notwithstanding all the prince's professions of love for you, no sooner do you ask him to satisfy your curiosity on one little point than he scruples not to disappoint you. However, you are his wife, and ought certainly to know everything that concerns him. You can persist in your request until he relents, and, by setting before him the relation in which you stand to him, bring him to a sense of what is due to you in your position.' She then ridiculed the idea of the prince's sudden death should he reveal the secret to his wife; and wound up by pointing out the marked and unfeeling manner in which he refused compliance with her wishes. Moheeny was naturally of an easy and pliable disposition, and her youth and inexperience rendered her incapable of perceiving the drift of Shambae's continued and eager entreaties to obtain the desired information. 'You speak truly,' said Moheeny; 'I have an undoubted right to be satisfied by my husband.' So impressed was she with the slight that had been put upon her by Prince Sewdass, that she went into her room, and, having thrown aside her ornaments, gave herself up to the indulgence of immoderate grief, tearing out her beautiful and clustering hair by hand-

fuls in her rage. The prince, as was customary with him, made his ablutions and performed his usual worship before he sat down to his meal, but was astonished, after waiting some time, that his consort did not make her appearance. He enquired of Shambae where Moheeny was, and the widow said she was in her bed-room, but that she did not know what she was doing. The prince went hastily into the room, and there saw his wife asleep, with her countenance swollen with recent weeping and her hair dishevelled and in disorder. He wondered at all this, and, after gazing at her for awhile in bewilderment, he approached her and roused her from her slumber. To his eager enquiries as to what had occurred to disturb her so violently, she replied that she was surprised he should take any interest in her after what had passed between them the previous night. 'By refusing to comply with a reasonable request on my part,' said she, 'you have proved that you no longer deem me worthy of sharing your confidence. Is that not a sufficient cause to make me miserable for life?' The prince was much mortified and even enraged at this language from one whom he had hitherto considered quite a pattern of obedience; his love for her, however, got the better of him after a short time, and he said, 'If you are determined upon knowing the secret, I will impart it to you; the consequence you already know. Go and bathe, and after you have taken your food and adorned your person, come to me.' Moheeny, hearing this, did all she was asked to do, and once more regained her usual vivacity and good humour. At night, when they retired to rest, she desired Sowdass to fulfil his promise of that morning, as she was very impatient to receive the desired information. The prince told her that, from her importunity on the forbidden subject, he apprehended some calamity was about to befal them, but that as she seemed resolved upon it, he could not in his heart refuse her, though his revealing the secret would be at the risk of his very existence, as he had already told her, 'Look at that sword,' continued he, pointing to the one hanging in his

room; 'whenever that weapon is put into the fire and heated until it is red-hot, that moment will be my last. This is all I have been told by my preceptor. I hope you will, if you value my life, bury this secret in your own bosom. It is unseemly in a man and wife to allow anything to cause a diminution of their regard for each other; and it is solely to avoid such an evil that I have been induced to reveal the secret of my death to you. Let me see that you prove yourself, my dearest Moheeny, worthy of the great trust I have now reposed in you.' Moheeny affectionately embraced the prince, and then fell prostrate at his feet, imploring heaven to preserve and prosper him, and to increase daily, aye, even hourly, their mutual regard and affection for each other.

"Moheeny was not a little surprised to hear the account given her of the sword, and, as is usual with women generally, she thought of the necessity of having a confidante. Shambae had so won upon the affection of the princess, that the latter thought she might place implicit reliance upon her; so she eagerly awaited the coming morning to unburden her bosom of the weighty secret, which had become so oppressive to her that she spent a restless night. Accordingly, in the morning, Moheeny called the widow, and informed her in an exulting manner that she had at last persuaded her husband to tell her the secret of his death, and she then proceeded to lay it all in detail before the now overjoyed Shambae. 'Is this true?' asked the latter. 'Yes,' replied Moheeny, 'he has actually told me all that his tutor, the learned hermit, had foretold regarding him; so that you see you were wrong in not believing him to be sincere in his love for me.' The wicked Shambae rejoiced at the favorable result of all the trouble she had been at for king Kankameroo's sake, and she told Moheeny that she was glad to hear her husband had given so great a proof of his devotion to her. 'You are happy,' said she, 'superlatively happy; for what can give greater happiness than the consciousness of being loved in an equal measure

by the object dearest to us? Life without love would become a loathsome burden.'

"Shambae allowed three days to pass by without attempting anything further, except that she asked the princess, in a playful manner, to let her have a sight of the wonderful sword which had been bestowed by the hermit on her husband. 'It must be a miraculous one,' said she. Moheeny was quite ignorant of the villany that lurked under so much apparent regard and solicitude; she therefore did not hesitate to satisfy her in this particular, and, with that view, conducted her to the inner room. Shambae marked well the spot where it hung; and, to disarm suspicion, again entered into an eulogistic dissertation on the sincerity of the prince's attachment to his wife. The widow determined in her own mind, however, that the prince should die that night; so she made a fierce fire in the kitchen, and, after they had all retired for the night, she went on tip-toe into the room where the sword was suspended, and stole away with it in her possession. She then hastened to put it into the fire; and, as it became red-hot, the life of Prince Sewdass gradually ebbed away, until at length he expired!

"Next morning, when Moheeny awoke and arose from her bed, she thought she noticed something unusual in the appearance of her husband; she therefore tried to awaken him, but what was her horror at finding that he was stiff and lifeless! She instantly raised an alarm, and cried for help. 'Oh, my dear and loving husband!' exclaimed she, in an agony of grief, 'what is this that has happened to you? Why lie you there so motionless and still?' She then rushed from the apartment, calling wildly to Shambae for assistance, like one suddenly bereft of her senses. The suspicion of the widow's treachery now for the first time crossed her mind, and on glancing at the place where the sword usually hung, her fears were confirmed—it had disappeared! She wept bitter tears of repentance—she beat her breast, and tore her hair. 'Unhappy wretch that

I am!' cried she, 'where shall I look for protection now?—oh, where shall I find peace? Could I but restore you, my dearest husband, to life and consciousness, if but for a moment, I would willingly forfeit mine own! Alas! this would never have happened had I not compelled you to communicate the secret of your death! I am irrecoverably undone!' While Moheeny was thus lamenting her cruel loss, Shambae rushed into the room with outstretched arms, feigning great distress, and exclaiming, 'My dear lady!—my angelic mistress!—what is the matter? What has happened to you?' 'Cruel woman!' replied Moheeny, 'Your are the cause of this mischief!—I know it but too well! You have cruelly, heartlessly, deceived me! Your barbarous advice has made me miserable for life, depriving me of my dear and fondly-cherished husband! There was not the slightest need for his communicating to me the secret which you have, by your artful designs, wormed out of him for my own and his ruin. His blood be upon your head! He had expressly desired me not to admit you into our service, but out of pity for you I prevailed on him to consent to it; and this is what you have done in return for so much kindness! Oh, inhuman wretch!—how could you be so ungrateful and so callous as to sacrifice the life of one who never in his life did you the slightest injury? We were living happily together when you set foot within this peaceful dwelling, and, like some wild demon, envious of our blissful retirement, sowed the seeds of ruin and death!' The unfortunate wife proceeded long in this strain, ever and anon casting looks of withering scorn, hatred, and disgust at the inhuman woman before her, who, at length addressing Moheeny, said, 'Oh, my worthy mistress!—I humbly entreat you to moderate your grief. Your weeping and violent gesticulations will avail you nothing. I alone am here to pity and assist you; and it would be far better and more sensible were you to submit patiently to the will of God, who will doubtless in his mercy grant your husband a resting-place in heaven. I pray you accompany me to a

city hard by, where I will procure for you one of the handsomest and mightiest of the princes of the earth to supply the place of him whose loss you now deplore. This king—for he is the reigning monarch of the city in question—will not, I am sure, give you the least cause of dissatisfaction: he will bestow upon you his undivided affection, and share all he has with you.' This speech so enraged Moheeny, that she seized a large stone, and threw it with great force at Shambae, who, however, by a timely motion of her head, avoided the blow which had been aimed at her. Notwithstanding this unmistakeable sign of Moheeny's disinclination to listen to the widow's proposal, the latter again addressed her. 'You are a lovely being,' said she, 'and it will never do for you to pine away in obscurity in this desolate wilderness. Besides, some misfortune greater than the present will probably befal you if you remain here, now that your protector and husband is numbered with the dead, nor can I stay with you any longer; so take my advice, and follow me. Leave this dismal place, and let the recollection of the dead be buried with him. It is appointed that every man should die once,—it is the road we must all go; in a word, it is worse than useless to rush into extremes of passion when by so doing we cannot remedy the evil.' Shambae continued in this strain for some time, and at length succeeded in making some impression on Moheeny, who, on considering her isolated condition, and the impossibility of remaining much longer in that dreary spot, in the end consented to accompany the widow, and be guided in her future proceedings by circumstances.

"There were now only seven days required for the expiration of the period at the end of which Hurridass, the prince's bosom-friend and companion, had promised to visit them. Moheeny knew this, and she resolved upon keeping it closely locked within her own bosom, lest the widow should find means to deceive Hurridass and prevent his coming, so much in dread of this woman did the unfortunate Moheeny stand. Previous to their departure she went into her

husband's room, and wept over his remains; she then covered them with a large winding-sheet, upon which she placed two of the jewels of her neck ornament, exposed openly to view, for the information of Hurridass, should he arrive in fulfilment of his promise. After this, with a heavy heart, she bade Shambae take her where she pleased. Moheeny plucked off two other jewels on her way out, and placed them in the middle of the entrance to the cave; and all along her journey she managed, unperceived by her companion, to drop a jewel here and there, at short distances, by which their track might be preserved, should Hurridass feel disposed to follow her.

CHAPTER XI.

Veytal concludes the history, and disappears.

"THE Princess Moheeny and the widow Shambae proceeded on their way together, as we have seen, and within a few days arrived within the dominions of king Kankameroo, by whom the princess was so loved, though he had never seen her. Shambae immediately sent forward a messenger to his majesty, informing him of the successful termination of her mission, and that she was even then conducting the object of his passion towards his capital. The messenger appeared before the monarch with as little delay as possible, and the king was thrown into a transport of joy on receiving the glad tidings. He ordered that two palanquins, several female attendants, and a proper suite, should be sent out to meet Moheeny, accompanied also by a large number of musicians and all the other necessary appendages to the train of a lady of rank and station. Shortly after, Moheeny and Shambae were conducted to the palace in great state, and the people flocked in from all quarters to catch a glimpse of the beautiful lady that was brought for the king. They all with one accord gave their opinion that she was a person of incomparable beauty and figure, and that there was not one in the whole kingdom who could be compared to her. Moheeny was directed to take possession of one of the best sets of apartments in the palace, which was assigned to her by the king's express command.

"The monarch found in Moheeny all that the most vivid imagination could have painted, and he was for awhile almost beside himself with joy at the contemplation of her dazzling beauty. He was so transported with extacy that he addressed her thus:—'My goddess! my charmer!—

whence came you? I never before felt for the handsomest among women what I now feel for you! From the day on which I became possessed of the rich diamond, I have been like one in a trance, and your lovely presence restores me to life, love, and happiness!' Then, turning to Shambae, who stood by, he said, 'My good woman, you have placed me under a deep debt of gratitude: but for you I should ere this have been numbered with the dead. I give you credit for the greatest tact and ability, and you shall henceforth have charge of all my queens. I thank you sincerely for all you have done: you have acted the part of a great and skilful physician, and have cured me of my malady. You may rest assured you shall not go unrewarded.' The king continued praising this woman excessively, adding at last that she even surpassed his minister in capacity and judgment; and she was immediately made matron and keeper of his queens' apartments.

"At night, after supper, the king sent for Shambae, and desired her to ask Moheeny whether she would allow him to pass the night with her. The widow accordingly repaired to Moheeny's room, and begged her to grant his majesty's request. Moheeny smiled, and said, 'I should have had much pleasure in acknowledging my gratitude and esteem for the king by obeying him at once, but that I have made a vow to a certain deity, which precludes the possibility—for the present, at least—of compliance. I have been very fortunate in falling into such good hands. My vow was made for the purpose of securing a good and happy position, when the death of my husband left me without a friend or protector. This I have now obtained, but I cannot on any account agree to the king's proposal until after I shall have fulfilled the *vrut*.* Only then can I venture to take part in anything worldly. Permit me also,' continued Moheeny, 'to thank you for your share in what has resulted in securing me so happy a condition. Your kindness I shall

* Consecration by vow.

never forget. You seem to have great influence with his majesty: use it now in my behalf. All I want is nine days for completing my vow. I also desire that his majesty will be pleased to order the necessary preparations for the occasion, and direct the chief priest of his household to prepare for the *vrut*, in accordance with our law. Lose no time, good mother, but go quickly and submit my requests to his majesty, and intercede for me.' The deluded Shambae returned to the king, and communicated to him all that Moheeny had said; at the same time she besought him to have patience, and to grant Moheeny's request; adding that there was no fear of her escaping, as she was strictly confined within his palace, and carefully watched. The king unwillingly consented, and retired to sleep. Next morning he directed a temporary shed to be erected, beautifully and richly ornamented, and, having summoned the priests and worshipped the deity, as was the custom, the brahmins and other devout persons were sumptuously feasted for the space of nine days. On the ninth day, towards the close of the ceremony, Moheeny, according to the direction of the chief priest, worshipped the deity, and then, clasping her hands together, she addressed it thus:—'O goddess! I know thee to be the principal maker of the universe; the hermits and sages are perpetually thinking of thee; Brahma* is unable to recount thy invisible power! How then can I, with my profane tongue, praise thee as I ought? People born blind are restored to sight if thou but lookest on them; the lame are made to walk, the idiot restored to sense, and the dumb made to speak! Thy compassion is great beyond measure! If thou pleasest thou canst immediately change pebbles into precious stones; therefore the devotees engage in the profoundest and most abstract contemplation of thee. Hermits are absorbed in the meditation of thy goodness; the pious and learned are continually

* The first of the Hindoo Triad, or the form of the deity as creator of the universe.

praising thy endless power! O goddess! O deity! behold my miserable condition, and listen to my invocation! Pity me, and relieve me from the dreadful misfortune that is now impending over me!' As she was thus praying, a voice was heard from the heavens, saying, 'Moheeny! fear not! —your deliverance is at hand! Your beloved husband and his friend will soon visit you!' On hearing these words of consolation, the princess felt greatly reassured. She prostrated herself before the deity in thanksgiving, after which she arose, calm and collected.

"Let us return now to Hurridass, whom we left with the hermit. He there mastered every mysterious art, and became thoroughly conversant with the moral duty of mankind. One night he dreamed that his friend, Prince Sewdass, was in great danger, and expiring in the cavern where he had left him in health and enjoyment. This occurred on the very night during which Shambae was engaged in prosecuting her base designs against the prince. He started up affright, and looked around him, feeling much inclined to set out on the instant, but as the hour was late he contented himself with awakening the hermit and telling him his dream. The next morning, however, he requested the hermit's leave to go and see his friend, whom he had promised, he said, to visit in four months, and that period had already expired. The hermit consented to his going, and instructed him in a certain charm of resuscitation, at the same time giving him a pair of clogs, telling him to put them on his feet and then think of the place he wished to reach, and he would be instantly transported there. Hurridass, after prostrating himself before the hermit, and receiving his benediction, did as he was bid, and instantly, almost within the twinkling of an eye, he found himself at the cave. He was surprised to find that neither the prince nor his consort was there to receive him, and he began to search the different rooms. When he came to the bed-chamber, he perceived some one lying on the bed: he approached, and great was his horror, on opening the curtain and

removing the sheet, to find the prince stretched out lifeless! He was fully convinced that this misfortune had been brought about by the sword, for which he searched in the chamber and all over the place in vain. He thought he should perhaps find it in the fire-place, and sure enough it was there, plunged among the hot coals. He removed it for the purpose of cooling it, after which he rubbed its edge, and ran into the prince's apartment, taking a little water in his palm. There he uttered some words, as he had been instructed by the hermit, and sprinkled the water on the body of the prince, who moved as if in sleep, and then opened his eyes wide with astonishment at not finding his wife there, instead of whom he saw his friend Hurridass. Sewdass got up hastily, and they embraced each other in a most affectionate manner. The prince had not been aware of any design against his life, and therefore made no allusion to it, but at once enquired into the state of his friend's health. Hurridass, instead of satisfying him on this head, informed the prince of the cause of his journey by means of the clogs, and how he had brought him to life again. It then occurred to the prince that all this must have been the work of the widow, and he accordingly told his friend all that he knew of the matter. Hurridass interrupted him, and proposed they should both set about searching for Moheeny at once, which they did. They went into every room and place where there was any likelihood of finding her, but it was all in vain, as Moheeny had departed with the widow a few minutes before the arrival of Hurridass. In this dilemma they found under the cot the two jewels which Moheeny had placed on the sheet which covered her husband's remains, and they recognised the jewels as having formed part of her neck ornament. At last they lighted upon the one she had left at the gateway; they then re-entered the cavern and proceeded to examine the valuables and treasures in the place, all of which they found correct.

"The prince and Hurridass now made up their minds to

proceed in their search for Moheeny beyond the precincts of the cave, and therefore they made a hasty meal and came out together. A few steps further on they found another of the jewels, and so on at short distances from each other: these they gathered, and continued to follow the track. In a few days they arrived at the city where Moheeny was; and here they heard almost every man whom they met speak of a certain lady of high rank and rare beauty who had recently been brought to the palace, and who was then engaged in performing a ceremony to a certain deity, and that the ceremony was to conclude on that day. This lady, they said, had been brought from a remote place by a widow named Shambae, who was in the king's service, and had been sent to fetch this lovely creature, who was now deservedly admired by all, about four months before. The prince and his friend, on hearing this intelligence, were extremely concerned, and much incensed against the said widow; they could not help cursing both her and the king. They, however, lost no time in disguising themselves like respectable devotees, and in hastening to the palace. On their arrival the attendants conducted them, by the king's orders, to the assemblage of priests, who importuned them to assist at the last ceremony of the nine days' celebration. Moheeny, when she saw them, immediately recognised them, and received them with every demonstration of joy and respect, entreating them to assist her in the *purnahooty*.* Moheeny then sent for the widow, and, when she came, desired her to tell his majesty to send all his royal treasure, both jewels and cash, to be laid before the deity. It was brought accordingly, by order of the king, and piled before the deity in a circle. This latter ceremony was performed in the apartment allotted to Moheeny. The last rite having been performed, she distributed immense treasure and large quantities of clothing to the Brahmins, who, after regaling

* A particular burnt-offering to several deities, made at the close of certain ceremonies.

themselves at the expense of the king, set out on their respective journeys. Moheeny likewise bestowed her charity very liberally on others who had assisted her in the celebration. That day seemed very long to the king, so impatient was he to enjoy the society of the beautiful female who had tantalised him so long. It was scarcely dusk, when he sent for Shambae to carry a message from him to Moheeny.

"Prince Sewdass and his companion Hurridass, having taken some refreshment in Moheeny's apartment, were engaged in concerting plans of escape. In the mean time Moheeny sent for Shambae, and said to her, 'Good mother, the vow I made to secure the king for my husband has been fulfilled by your kind aid, for which I cannot sufficiently thank you. I shall ever remember it with feelings of gratitude.' Saying this, Moheeny approached her, and, holding her hand, respectfully forced her to sit down on a raised seat. No sooner was the widow seated than Moheeny shut the door of the apartment, and Hurridass beckoned to the prince to lose no time. 'Take the bar, and worship first the widow's head and then her feet,' said he. The hint was immediately taken by the prince, who got up, and, taking the bar, struck the widow on the head with such force that she fell dead without a groan. He repeated the blow in his fury, though Shambae showed no sign of life. Hurridass then rapidly collected all the treasure, among which he found the *paduck** which Moheeny had lost, and having made it into a bundle, he put on the invaluable clogs, took Sewdass and Moheeny one on each shoulder, muttered the charm that had been taught him by the hermit, and they were immediately transported back to the cave. The prince was lost in surprise at the miraculous aid afforded by the clogs, and thanked Hurridass for his kindness and the trouble he had taken in saving them from the danger they had just escaped. Moheeny set about relating to them all that had occurred to her subsequent to

* The centre diamond.

her departure from the cave, and in conclusion also thanked Hurridass for the signal service he had rendered them.

"King Kankameroo, having arrayed himself in his best and most costly apparel, awaited the coming of the widow in accordance with his summons. The attendant who had been sent for her returned and said that she had gone to Moheeny's apartment, whither he had followed her,—that finding the door closed he had knocked at it, but no answer came from within,—that he cried out several times, but received no reply. The king immediately repaired in person to the door of the apartment, and ordered it to be broken open; this having been done, they entered, and perceived, to their great amazement and horror, that the unfortunate widow was dead: her hands and feet were widely extended, and she lay weltering in her blood, a bar lying across her breast. At this spectacle the king began to lament the loss of one he prized so much as an instrument for carrying out his objects and designs; but his grief was turned into rage when he found that not only Moheeny was missing, but also all his treasure! He was wild with passion, and for a time could not utter a single word. At length he swooned, and found some relief in unconsciousness. When he recovered, he cried aloud, 'Oh, where is my diamond of love, and all my state treasure? How have I been deceived! I do not think it possible that I can survive the stroke! Let me die! I cannot sustain this double loss—the jewel of my heart and the jewels of my state!' His minister, who had received notice of the event, immediately repaired to the palace, and found the king in a great frenzy. He endeavoured to compose him, and said 'Your majesty must take courage, and not succumb to the grief which I know you must feel at the loss of your fair lady and the treasure of the state. Consider well what a sage has said, that acquisitions, death, and losses are not in the hand of man,—they are only in the hands of God. It is true that men are allowed to live and to enjoy themselves in this world, but that is because God so wills it. Our enjoyment here will

be in proportion to our merits. We doat upon such temporal enjoyments, and do our utmost to prolong them, but we cannot expect to be in possession of them for a moment longer than God wills it.' 'Oh my friend!' said the king, 'that is all very true, but listen to me. Were you capable of procuring for me the object of my love?—No; it was Shambae who brought her here. The beauty and charms of that unequalled being have smitten me to my heart's core, and I am wholly absorbed in grief and melancholy. Look what hypocrisy she has resorted to,—how she has killed my faithful servant, and made away with all my treasure! And in what way could she have effected all this? Alas! is there nothing you can propose to discover her retreat?' 'Do not allow yourself to suffer any more on her account,' resumed the minister; 'suppress your evil desires, and reflect for a moment on the greatness of God and his power. He has made all these luxuries and enjoyments for men, but how transient and short-lived are they! I implore your majesty to divert your mind from these worldly prizes, and to fix it in the contemplation of the glory of the Almighty, which will teach you and all of us how to conduct ourselves in this world. I trust your majesty will act as becomes your good sense and mature judgment, and, by adding to the comforts of your subjects, and ameliorating their condition, give them cause to love you and acknowledge your merit, and thus call down upon you the blessing of heaven.'

"Prince Sewdass and his friend Hurridass had by this time almost wholly forgotten the trials and sufferings they had undergone; and after living for awhile in ease and comfort, they contemplated visiting their respective parents, from whom they had not heard since their elopement. After some consultation they raised, with great exertion and at enormous expense, an immense army, like that of some great and powerful monarch, and, loading a number of camels with the wealth, riches, and furniture they found in the cavern, they set out for the city from whence they

had first travelled. The troops formed a magnificent retinue, and in a few days they reached the neighbourhood of the city. The officer of the fort received information that a great army was approaching, and he became greatly alarmed. When, however, he saw it with his own eyes, he thought proper not to lose a moment in reporting it to the king, who was also taken by surprise. He directly despatched an officer to bring authentic intelligence as to the object of this grand array of men and beasts. The officer, on reaching the advanced guard of the strange army, tried to glean some information from the soldiers, but could learn nothing satisfactory, so he returned to the king without loss of time, and informed him that he had failed in extracting anything from the men, as they were all profoundly silent. On this the king ordered his regular troops to be on the alert; and, as soon as the principal officers of state had been summoned to his presence, he ordered them to proceed with the troops, and stop the progress of the enemy, and, if need be, to engage them in battle.

"The king's army accordingly proceeded on their mission, and marched quickly to meet the forces of Prince Sewdass. The latter, seeing the hostile movement of the king's troops, and rightly guessing the cause, despatched a messenger with an epistle addressed to the king. He was ushered into the royal presence, and was received with the usual courtesies. He then delivered the packet, and informed his majesty, in addition, of every particular regarding Prince Sewdass and the minister's son. The king and his minister could scarcely believe their senses; but after awhile, every doubt as to the identity of the persons heading the foreign troops having been removed, the court rang with cheers of joy and welcome. The king went forth in person to meet his son, and in his train followed the minister and a host of others. The two friends, Sewdass and Hurridass, were delighted to see their respective fathers, and having alighted from their chargers, they embraced them with sincere joy and much affection. They

then proceeded into the city, amid the cheers of those assembled. The king conducted them to his palace, where Hurridass took leave of the prince and the now aged king, and wended his steps, together with *his* father, to the paternal mansion. There he was met by his mother and relatives, who all by turns lavished on him their affectionate caresses. In like manner was the prince received at the palace.

"The day following, the aged monarch declared before his assembled courtiers that, being worn out with age and the infirmities attendant thereon, he had resolved on placing the crown on the head of Prince Sewdass, his son, and on nominating Hurridass prime minister, in place of *his* father. The assembled gentry and the officers of the court heard the resolution with great and unfeigned joy, for they knew that the successors to the king and to the minister were worthy of that distinction, and would acquit themselves in a manner worthy of their rank and position. Accordingly, the king, having seated Prince Sewdass on the throne with all due form and ceremony, invested Hurridass with the robe of the prime minister. Rejoicings and displays befitting the occasion were celebrated in and around the palace, and the populace shouted with one voice their wishes for long life and prosperity to the newly-created sovereign and his minister. Thus did Prince Sewdass and his friend enter at an early age into the administration of state affairs, but they nevertheless conducted themselves with so much dignity and judgment that they gained the applause of all who witnessed their bearing and conduct, as well as universal respect and esteem."

The peacock, having concluded the above relation, flew from the *chowrung* on which he had been seated, and was instantly lost to view in the design upon the wall.

CHAPTER XII.

Veytal re-appears, in the form of a peculiar description of swan, and commences to relate the history of the Princess Chitrangee and Charoo, the merchant's son.

WHEN the peacock made his exit, as related at the conclusion of the last chapter, there remained only a *prahur** to sun-rise. The Princess Pudmavuntty and the disguised brahmin were much delighted with the narration of the peacock, and wished that some other bird would make its appearance and amuse them in a like manner, which would enable them to sit out the remainder of the night in the enjoyment of similar pleasure. They had barely time to give expression to their thoughts, when the Veytal again appeared, for the fourth time, in the shape of a Rajhouse,† and took up his seat upon the *chowrung*, as the three other birds had done. It must be recollected that the brahmin was the only person present who knew it to be the Veytal. The fine shape and beautiful feathers of the Rajhouse contrasted so strongly with his odd tricks and apparently funny disposition, that the princess fell into an immoderate fit of laughter, but she did not tell it to commence its tale, which as usual fell to the brahmin, who addressed the Rajhouse in the following words:—"Oh most excellent bird!—I pray you do us the favour of diverting us with a tale until the dawn, which will not be long in coming. We have spent the greater portion of the night in listening to the interesting tales of three different birds, and I sincerely hope you will contribute to our amusement from the store of knowledge you doubtlessly possess." The

* A period of three hours.

† A peculiar description of swan.

Rajhouse replied, "I do not refuse to do your bidding, but ere I proceed I must beg of you to obtain the permission of our royal hostess, which is essentially necessary. Moreover, the relation I purpose giving is one of much interest, and will doubtless be productive of considerable amusement." The princess, hearing this, thought to herself that this tale would probably surpass even those she had already heard, and therefore bade the Rajhouse proceed at once with it; whereupon the bird, having indicated to the brahmin that the princess had both laughed and spoken, and solicited the close attention of all present to what he was about to relate, began as follows:—

"There was once in heaven, in Indra's* hall of audience, a grand assemblage of angels and other spirits, at which dancing-girls of every description and nation were invited to attend. Among them was one named Chitrangee, who was possessed of great beauty and attractions, combined with skill and a genteel deportment. Indra, who was much pleased with her, desired her to sing and dance, and she submissively obeyed his royal mandate. She sang with such tenderness and pathos that the whole assemblage expressed their high delight, and extolled her beauty and qualifications in very profuse terms, as well as her musical performance. Before, however, she had ended the dance, she lost her unison and consonance with the instrument, which greatly displeased them. Indra, preceiving this confusion, fell into a violent passion, and exclaimed, 'O thou wretched woman!—thou false one!—what is this thou art doing before the *subha*?† Thou shalt assume the form of humanity, and dwell in the world!' These words fell upon the ears of Chitrangee like a thunder-clap, and she stood as though spell-bound in the midst of her dancing. Clasping

* The name of the deity presiding over Swarga (the Hindoo Paradise) and the secondary divinities.

† An assembly.

her hands together in the most submissive manner, she thus addressed the enraged Indra :—' My lord, be merciful to me !—pardon my shortcomings if I have been wanting in my duties ! Restore me to thy favor and to happiness, otherwise I shall be wholly undone !' Indra was moved and somewhat appeased by her entreaty, and told her that she should not be subjected to any great misery, but should be transformed into a princess, and should dwell in the court of a king,—that when she attained the age of twelve she would become possessed of great talent and virtue,—that a person who would give her a full account of Chitrakoot would wed her,—and that after she had made herself fully acquainted with that narrative she would exchange her mortal frame for one of celestial mould, such as she then possessed, and be again reunited to the host of heavenly beings. She prostrated herself accordingly at the feet of Indra, and, after taking leave of all those assembled there, she returned to her abode at Chitrakoot, where she spent the day in the usual manner, but in a very dejected mood. At night she retired to sleep, and in her sleep her soul quitted her body and descended to the world.

" There was at that time a king in the city of Kanchunpoory named Chakradunt, who was gifted with every virtue, and who had a very chaste and handsome consort, but although they had been married for several years they had not been blessed with issue. This was a source of great uneasiness to the king. At length the queen, for the first time, became pregnant, which sent a thrill of joy into the king's almost withered heart. In the usual course of nature she was delivered of a daughter of surpassing beauty, and they called her Chitrangee.* The king caused great rejoicings to be made, and thanksgiving to be offered throughout his dominions, and performed the usual ceremonies enforced by custom and religion. The child was reared with great care and solicitude until she arrived at years of discretion,

* Signifying, *Endowed with varied talents and excellencies.*

when the king proposed that she should marry; and with that view ordered his minister to repair, with a suitable retinue, to the courts of various neighbouring princes, to seek for a personage of befitting rank and position to become the husband of Chitrangee. He also sent several other officers on a like errand. They were engaged in this way for several years, but no eligible consort could be found for the princess. They therefore returned to court, and acquainted the king with the unsuccessful result of their mission, at which he was extremely grieved, and thrown into considerable anxiety. While he was revolving in his mind what he should next do, the princess, observing the mood he was in, presented herself before her father, and begged him in such moving terms to make her acquainted with the cause of his apparent distress, that he could not refrain from opening his mind to her. 'My lord,' said she, 'be not grieved that you have not been able to procure a fit personage to become my partner for life. Permit me to propose a plan which I trust will prove successful, and ensure the realisation of your wishes. I am sensible of your paternal love and affection, which have for their aim the promotion of my happiness. The scheme I would propose is this: let a large, round, and smooth wooden pillar be erected; on its top let one thousand small bundles be fastened, in a single row, and under each of these bundles place a ruby. The person who claims my hand in marriage must first climb to the top of the pillar and remove each of the rubies separately from under its respective bundle, and then give me an exact account of the Chitrakoot mountain, as I am very desirous to become acquainted with it. The person who acquits himself of this task to my satisfaction shall be my husband, of whatever degree or condition in life he may be, even if he be poor or deformed. Your majesty need only write notices to this effect, and publish them far and wide, besides sending them to all the courts you can think of. I am sure the greatest men and princes will attend, if not on my account, at least for the sake of

displaying their gallantry and capacity.' The king approved highly of his daughter's suggestion, and set about it forthwith. Letters having been sent to all the neighbouring courts, and public notice given, the pillar was erected near the gate of the palace, and preparations on an extensive scale were made for the occasion. Shortly afterwards the messengers returned from the several courts, with a reply that all the nobles and princes regretted very much they could not consent to attempt the task, as it was a most severe one: they had heard of many, they said, but none of them so difficult of accomplishment as the one now proposed by his majesty. Though they might perform the dangerous ascent of the pillar, it was more than doubtful whether any could be found to give an exact account of the Chitrakoot mountain. Under these circumstances, therefore, they each and all begged his majesty would excuse their attendance, which could be productive of nothing but their utter humiliation and discomfiture. The king was astonished and much disappointed on receiving this reply. He however resolved on giving the matter a fair trial, and with that view sent criers round the country, intimating that all classes of persons would be allowed to contend for the princess' hand in the manner prescribed; and in the mean time a strong guard was placed in charge of the pillar.

"In the city of Charten, which was formerly governed by a powerful monarch, there lived a merchant named Nanawuttee, who had by his care and industry amassed much wealth, and who lived in great splendour. He was married to a beautiful wife, endowed with much virtue and good sense, who had borne him three sons. The first was called Kotashwer, the second Lockaswer, and the third Charoo.* Of these the youngest was the greatest favourite with his parents. The merchant was confined to his bed with old age and infirmities; he thought he had not long to live, and he therefore called his wife and sons to his

* Signifying, *Elegance.*

bedside, and told them that he could not long remain their friend and protector, but was about to pay the last debt of nature,—that he was thankful to God for prolonging his days so far, and for the happiness that had been vouchsafed to him. 'But,' said he, 'I must now leave you and attend the call of the Supreme lawgiver. Be careful to follow my example, and bow with submission to the will of God, who orders everything for the good of his creatures. Remember also that it is the lot of every man to die once.' Then, addressing himself to his favorite child, he said, 'My beloved Charoo, you are still unsettled in life. You are young, and do not yet know the world. Be guided therefore by your elder brothers, who will instruct you in all that is necessary for your happiness. Be of good cheer, and do not take my departure from amongst you to heart. Be wise, and continue to live together in peace and harmony. Be virtuous, and you will meet with your reward hereafter.' Shortly afterwards, the old man died, and his sons became the sole heirs to his immense property. They conducted themselves in such a manner as to deserve the applause of all good men, as well as of their neighbours and relatives. Young Charoo, however, had, unknown to all, become a confirmed gamester, which was not found out until it was too late to snatch him from the yawning chasm into which he was fast rushing: the habit had taken too deep-rooted a hold on him. In addition to his gaming propensities he was daily squandering away his share of the fortune in extravagant and riotous living. The two elder brothers tried to check the growing evil, and begged him repeatedly to reform his conduct, so detrimental to his prospects in life, and injurious alike to his character and fortune. They said that he who led a life of debauchery and excesses deserved to be treated in a severe manner, and be at last reduced to extreme poverty and want. Notwithstanding their continued entreaties and corrective advice, they regretted exceedingly to find that it was all of no more avail than was the good example set by themselves.

Charoo continued his evil courses, without any attempt at reformation.

"One day he went as usual with his companions to engage in play, and he lost a large sum of money. Not satisfied with this, he borrowed a thousand rupees from an acquaintance, which he also lost in the same way. When their gambling was concluded the lender demanded instant payment of his money. Charoo had no alternative but to endeavour to comply, so he requested his creditor to accompany him to his brothers, whom he desired to liquidate the debt for him. Instead of doing so, however, one of his brothers became so enraged and choleric that he refused at once, and, in addition, began to revile Charoo. 'Foolish man!' said he, 'you have already dissipated your share of our father's legacy. You are now approaching manhood, and yet make no effort to wean yourself of your evil practices, or to get rid of your swindling associates. You are a disgrace to all who are in any way connected with you! Get thee hence! —quit this house instantly, and find a dwelling where best you can!' These words so mortified the misguided Charoo, that he immediately resolved on leaving the paternal roof. Before he put his final determination into effect, however, he applied to his other brother for the pecuniary assistance he required, but he met with no better reception than before. He then resolved upon endeavouring to borrow the money, and went for that purpose to each and all of his professed friends, but he found that they either would not or could not lend him a single coin. He was thus placed in a great dilemma; but at length, on his using great persuasion and entreaty, his creditor consented to wait until the morrow, when Charoo promised to procure the amount for him by some means or other. Having obtained this respite, he proceeded home in a thoughtful mood, and very much crestfallen at having lost the reputation and position he once held among those given to his mode of living. He found his wife waiting for him, and no sooner did she see him than she divined from his countenance that he had met

with some heavy loss; she did not therefore venture to question him. Charoo bathed himself and worshipped the household deity, after which he partook of his supper and went to bed. His wife then ventured to ask him the cause of his great uneasiness, which, she said, altogether changed the expression of his features, and rendered him unusually dull and melancholy. Charoo could not withstand the affection which prompted the enquiry, so he revealed everything. 'This morning,' said he, 'I lost a great deal of money in gambling, and when I had nothing left I borrowed a thousand rupees from an acquaintance, which soon went the same way as the rest. The creditor made a demand for instant payment, and, not having any money of my own left, I took him to my brothers, and begged of them in turn to pay it for me. They had not only the cruelty to refuse me, but heaped terms of opprobrium and abuse on my head; and, to add to the indignity, they told me never more to set foot within the family mansion. Hereupon I applied for assistance to those who called themselves my best and most intimate friends, towards whom I had on all occasions been most liberal and true, but I fared no better. I am sensible now of the value of money. My brothers would never have treated me in the manner they did had I still possessed my wealth, or even a portion of it; nor would my friends, as they called themselves, have disregarded my application to them. I am certainly to blame for my folly in squandering away my inheritance. I might have been trusted to any extent had I not proved so fickle and weak-minded. I now repent of my past conduct, and will try to atone for it in future. My present difficulty is how to meet the debt I have to-day incurred. The man will assuredly be here to-morrow, and I have no means of paying him. What shall I do? Whither can I look for assistance?' Charoo's wife was a model of beauty and virtue, and could not but feel deeply for her husband's misfortune. In her affection she said to him, 'I pray you not to give the matter another thought, but take the trinkets I now wear,

which you know are yours, and dispose of them to satisfy your ruthless creditor.' Charoo affectionately embraced her, and thanked her from the bottom of his heart for the sacrifice she had made. They then composed themselves to sleep with some degree of calmness.

"Next morning, Charoo sent for the creditor, and when he came he made over to him valuables sufficient to cover the debt, and took from him an acquittance. Charoo was naturally of a liberal turn of mind, so after he had transferred to him such jewels as he knew would be sufficient, he asked the creditor whether he had received enough. 'Let me know,' said he, 'whether they are sufficient or not. I will give you more if you wish it and will consent to follow me, as I am about to travel into foreign parts.' The creditor was aware that what he had already received would more than liquidate his claim, but being of a grasping nature, and without a grain of conscience, he said he would follow Charoo. On leaving home, Charoo said to his wife, 'Dear wife, I am indeed sorry to leave you alone, but necessity compels me to it. It is no longer possible for me to live here after what has occurred. I must try to regain my lost property. I am about to enter into foreign trade, as well as to gain by travel some knowledge of the world. During my absence I trust you will spend your time between your domestic concerns and thoughts of me, and conduct yourself in a peaceable and respectable manner in the bosom of my family.' His wife was bathed in tears at this sudden resolution of her husband: she begged him never to forget her in the midst of the acquisitions which she felt sure he was fated to make, and wished him every possible happiness. With many expressions of mutual sympathy and good feeling they parted from each other.

"Charoo set out on his journey, accompanied by his creditor, and in a few days arrived at the city of Kanchunpoory. He there learned the condition attached to the acquisition of the Princess Chitrangee's hand in marriage, and he was determined to make the venture. The prospect

before him, in case he succeeded, encouraged him greatly. He went to the palace, near which the pillar was erected, and enquired of the head guardsman whether what he had heard as having been proclaimed regarding the princess was true; and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, Charoo first examined the pillar very narrowly, and then briskly climbed to the top of it. It was not without difficulty, however, and that of no ordinary kind, that he effected this feat. Having got up, he proceeded slowly to untie the silken knots which enclosed the rubies, and having secured them all, he descended with far greater ease than he mounted. He gave the rubies to his creditor, who, being now perfectly satisfied, went his way.

"The guardsman in charge of the pillar never for a moment expected that Charoo was capable of displaying so much perseverance and presence of mind as was required for so hazardous an undertaking, and he was therefore much astonished when he saw it performed so readily. The agility and strength of Charoo soon became the theme of conversation throughout the city; and the report of the performance of the arduous feat was immediately conveyed to the king, who was greatly delighted to hear of the youth's prowess. He directed Charoo to be introduced into the palace without the loss of a moment, and all eyes were directed to where the hero of the day was to make his appearance. Charoo was accordingly brought in, and the king advanced to meet him, and to give him a cordial welcome, extolling his courage and perseverance in terms of high praise; after which he was conducted into the presence of the princess.

"The fair Chitrangee, seeing a young man of prepossessing appearance and great physical powers, felt a sudden love for him in the private recesses of her heart. She was gratified, too, that he had ventured forth to win her at so great a risk of humiliation and mortifying ridicule, to which he would most certainly have been exposed had he failed in his attempt. It now only remained for him to give a

description of the Chitrakoot mountain, which the princess, after the usual exchange of civilities, requested him to do. Charoo told her in reply, that if he had known it was absolutely necessary to relate the tale of Chitrakoot, he would have procured the necessary information. 'Some time ago,' continued he, 'I called at Indra's palace on particular business, and on my way I saw from a great distance the mountain in question, but as I then had no interest in learning anything about it, and being quite taken up with my business, I thought it would be losing time to visit it. If, however, you are anxious to know the particulars respecting that place, I must solicit from you sufficient time to travel there, which I will undertake to do solely on your account, and hasten back with the desired information. Please God I shall soon return.' The king and the princess were equally pleased with the eloquence and sound sense with which Charoo spoke. The remainder of that day was spent in feasting and other enjoyments, and on the following morning Charoo expressed his willingness to depart for the mountain of Chitrakoot. The king and the princess having consented, he set out, followed by their earnest prayers that God would be pleased to preserve him from all dangers; that blessings might attend him in all he undertook; and that he might return safely home. Charoo thanked them in all sincerity for their kind and affectionate wishes on his behalf, and commenced his journey with a stout heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

Veytal proceeds with his tale.

"KING CHAKRADUNT himself accompanied Charoo beyond the city gate, and at parting addressed him thus:—'My dear Charoo, you will, I doubt not, by God's blessing succeed in your enterprise. Lose no time, therefore, in returning to us. You will gladden us by your early re-appearance.' Charoo renewed his thanks to the king, and went his way. He travelled northward, and in due course of time arrived at the capital city of Badrikadar, which was not only famed for its wealth and situation, but was also much esteemed and held in high repute by Hindus as a place especially devoted to worship and for pilgrimage. In this city there was a temple dedicated to Shree Narayen, to which Charoo immediately repaired, and made his invocation in the manner prescribed by Hindu law. On his way to the famed mount it was his good fortune to meet with an aged and venerable hermit, whose solemn countenance and devout appearance caused Charoo to throw himself humbly at his feet. The hermit desired him to rise, and bestowed upon him his benediction. He was pleased to see a youth of such a comely and handsome bearing as Charoo, who, although he had then attained only his seventeenth year, yet exhibited the proportions of a full-grown man. The hermit, addressing him, said, 'Young man, where are you going, and what is your name? Are you married? Are your parents still living, and what calling do your family pursue? Do not dissemble, but speak the truth.' Charoo sighed, and then faithfully informed him of every particular respecting himself and the mission on which he was engaged. The hermit recommended him to accompany him to his abode, and on their arrival there Charoo earnestly solicited the

hermit to guide and advise him, in order that he might succeed in obtaining the information he sought. The hermit smiled, but looked thoughtful. 'What is your idea, Charoo,' said he, 'of this mission? Do you think it possible that you will succeed? You are indeed lucky in having met with me, because you would otherwise never have found out where the Chitrakoot mountain is situated, even if you wandered over half the world. In all probability no human being has ever gained admittance there; how, then, can you by any possibility expect to succeed in your mission? However, listen attentively to what I am about to say, for it is of the utmost importance to you. There is on the mountain of Himonchul* a most beautiful Vur tree: it has a large trunk and seven branches. It rises to a great height, and the branches extend a hundred and twenty *yojuns* in circumference. On one of these branches there live a family of royal geese, consisting of a gander, a goose, and three goslings. These birds possess the remarkable power of entering into the three worlds,—namely, heaven, the earth we inhabit, and the infernal regions. They possess as much sense and discernment as any of the human kind, and they live chiefly upon celestial fruits. One of the birds goes daily to the heavenly regions for the purpose of procuring sufficient fruit to last for the day; this they do by turns. When the fruit is brought, it is immediately divided into seven shares, one of which is offered to God, and set apart for that purpose; a second is reserved for any guest who may happen to visit them; and the remaining five are distributed amongst them—one to each. Before they sit down to their meal, the bird who has brought the food that day calls out in a human voice for a guest, three times successively; if one chances to be near he is at once invited to partake of the share allotted to him, but if no guest appear they commence their repast, at the conclusion of which the two unconsumed shares are

* One of the Himalaya mountains.

thrown into the water. This is their daily practice; you must therefore proceed thither as a guest, taking care to be within hearing when the bird utters the usual call. When you present yourself they will invite you very civilly to join them, and will place a portion of the fruit before you with a request that you will partake of it. But do not touch it at first; and when they ask you the reason you must unfold your mission to them, and beseech their aid. Being very charitably disposed, they will doubtless agree to help you; and after they have promised their assistance you may eat the fruit laid before you.' After this advice the hermit presented Charoo with a fine fruit, and desired him to eat it, telling him that it possessed the rare virtue of preserving a person from every harm—from the attacks of wild beasts, snakes, or human beings, as well as from the pangs of hunger. Charoo received it with much gratitude, and eagerly devoured it; he then prostrated himself at the hermit's feet, thanking him for all he had done for him; and after receiving his blessing a second time, he started anew on his journey, in the direction pointed out by the holy man who had so materially befriended him.

"On his way towards Himonchul, Charoo encountered a great many hardships, all of which he successfully surmounted. At last he arrived at the foot of the mountain. Its immense height filled him with astonishment—its top seemed to pierce the skies. He could not then discern the tree the hermit had told him of, in consequence of the prevailing mist; he therefore remained where he was for that day, and anxiously awaited the coming morrow, when, with renewed strength and vigour he resolved to commence the perilous ascent. He was engaged for several days in this discouraging task, until at last, after much toil and fatigue, he gained the lofty summit, where he had the satisfaction of seeing the gigantic tree, with its seven large branches and its profuse and tender foliage; it also appeared loaded with fruit in uncommon abundance. Being scarcely able to distinguish objects in the dusk, he did not look for

the birds, but lay himself down to recruit his wearied frame. He spent the night in reflecting on the past and in devising plans for the future, and at early dawn he rose to look about for the birds. As noon approached, the heat became intense, and he sat down under the tree to refresh himself. While seated there, happening to cast his eyes upward, he saw one of the feathery tribe descending from a great height, and at length it alighted upon the very bough under which he was seated, but still at a great distance from him. Charoo arose and approached nearer, regretting much that he could not converse with the bird. He was still proceeding towards it, when he heard a loud voice, resembling that of a human being, enquiring if there was any guest to join them in their mid-day meal. Our traveller answered immediately. 'Yes,' said he, 'I am here, a stranger in this place.' The old goose, hearing this reply, immediately sent off one of her goslings, who flew towards Charoo and invited him to honour their dwelling with his presence. Charoo consented at once, whereupon the gosling raised him from the ground and took him up to one of the furthermost boughs of the Vur tree. The other birds seemed exceedingly pleased, and received Charoo very courteously. The old bird addressed him, saying, 'We are to day highly favored by the Almighty in providing us with a guest.' The whole of them then entered into familiar discourse, soon after which the birds set before Charoo his share of the celestial fruit, being the sixth portion. They desired him to eat without ceremony, telling him they had not the power to procure for him any other dainty. Charoo, as he had been instructed by the hermit, showed no inclination to eat, and the birds, perceiving it, said, 'We beg you will be kind enough to honor us by partaking of our food. We have offered you all we possess.' Charoo was moved by their affectionate solicitude, and could no longer remain silent, so, addressing himself to them, he said, 'It has pleased God to bring me here in the character of a guest. I am a stranger, and feel grateful for the kindness you have shown

me. Your condescension emboldens me to prefer a request which I would otherwise have never ventured to do. I will explain to you first why I have travelled so far, and then tell you what it is I desire of you.' He then told them in detail every circumstance with which it was necessary for him to acquaint them, and concluded by requesting that they would be kind enough to take him to the Chitrakoot mountain and afterwards bring him back to their abode. The birds readily consented to do so, and assured Charoo that they would do all in their power to promote his designs, what he had already asked them being a mere trifle. After this, Charoo desired them to proceed with their meal, and he himself fell to heartily. On the following day the royal bird directed the one whose duty it was to go that day for their daily allowance of fruit, to take up Charoo to the mountain of Chitrakoot, and to bring him back again, if he wished to return that day, or whenever he liked. The bird accordingly, with Charoo sitting on his back, flew away with incredible speed, and soon conveyed him to the top of the mountain. At parting, the bird told him he would return that way with the fruits at noon, and that until then he might walk into the town and inspect the novelties there to be seen. 'You must return to this place by that time,' continued the bird, 'and if I am not here, wait awhile for me, as this is the spot we daily frequent.' Charoo thanked the bird, and then directed his steps towards the gate of the city, on entering which he observed a great many men in various attitudes,—some were seated, others lying, and some standing on their feet, but all appeared to have lost the power of motion. He approached several, and found them all inanimate,—they could neither move nor utter a word. Charoo passed through several of the streets, and saw that in the shops, which were open, men were apparently busily engaged in counting money, and filling up bags with it, while others were in the act of locking up chests, but all in the same fixed attitude, without a single sign of life or motion. Charoo then amused himself by changing the

drapers' goods from one shop to another, after which he spilled some ghee which he found in one, and broke a large jar of oil in another, but the owners only eyed him fiercely, without being able to utter a syllable, still less to prevent him from committing his depredations. Charoo next went into one of the largest buildings in the city, where he found men and women engaged in different domestic occupations, and every one of them in a similar paralysed state. He could not comprehend what this phenomenon meant—that they should one and all be thus deprived of the power of speech and locomotion. At last he came to a very extensive square, in the centre of which a large mansion was situated. He entered it, in the hope of gaining some information relative to the extraordinary state of affairs in the place. The building was magnificently furnished, and the windows and doors were set in gold. He entered the inner hall, where lay a quantity of costly articles, as well as rich utensils of pure gold and silver. Next to this was a chamber, which appeared to Charoo to belong to a princess or a queen, and in the centre of it a handsome alcove, lighted by four lamps of solid gold. A slave stood at each corner of this alcove,—the two at the head holding fans in their hands, as though to keep the flies from disturbing their mistress, who lay within, and the two at the foot having their hands raised, in the act of presenting *virahs* to her: they too were all as motionless and insensible as the dead. He approached the alcove, and lifted the curtain which surrounded it, that he might see the lady who lay therein, and he was much struck with her exquisite beauty and loveliness. He fell passionately in love with her on the instant, so fascinating were her celestial charms. 'It is impossible,' he mentally said, 'to behold so much loveliness without paying the homage due to it.' He replaced the curtain as he found it, however, and left the place without exploring any further, nor did he even cast one stray look behind until he was fairly out of its neighbourhood. He felt very much dejected, nevertheless, as he retraced his steps to the place of

rendezvous, and awaited the coming of the bird. While there, as he cast his eyes around, he could not help admiring the beauty and grandeur of the scenery in and around that noble city, and it sent a pang of sorrow though his heart to think that so many of the good things of this world should lie in such profusion without a single creature being permitted to partake of the enjoyments which they afforded.

"The royal bird arrived at the appointed time, and having rested a short space, he bade Charoo prepare for his journey. In a few minutes he had transported him to the top of the mountain from whence they had set out. The other birds expressed much joy at his return, and, as usual, apportioned the fruit into seven shares, one of which they again offered to Charoo, and desired him to partake of it. They waited until he had commenced, and then they all followed his example. It was really a source of much pleasure to Charoo to reside with these intelligent birds, who showed such love and esteem for him, and he passed that day very pleasantly in their society. The old bird enquired of Charoo whether he had completed his mission, to which the latter replied very cheerfully that he had, and thanked them again for their aid. The birds then informed him of the advantages he would derive from having partaken of celestial fruit, —that it had the property of preventing sickness of every description, so that he would never more fall sick or suffer even the slightest indisposition,—nor could any beast, reptile, bird, or any of the creatures that injure man, have power to hurt him,—in short, that he had been immortalised by eating of the fruit. Charoo rejoiced at having fallen into the company of these celestial birds, and he was strangely delighted to hear that he would never die. He was profuse in his thanks, and having made as suitable a return in words as he could for the invaluable boon and kind favors granted to him, he requested permission to depart. The old bird was greatly averse to parting with his guest so soon, and regretted it exceedingly; he therefore begged of him to stay a little longer, and to partake of a

last grand entertainment, which hospitality Charoo could not well refuse, so he consented. Next day the birds regaled him on the choicest and most delicate fruits, and in the evening he took his leave and set out on his return. The birds accompanied him a great distance, and expressed much sorrow and many good wishes at parting.

"Charoo travelled with all haste to the city of Badrikadar: on approaching the cottage of the hermit he went in, and communicated to him his success, at the same time returning him sincere and heartfelt thanks for the valuable information he had given him; and on the following day, having received the hermit's blessing, he renewed his journey. In a few days he arrived safely at the court of the king of Kanchunpoory, who instantly recognised him, and received him with every demonstration of pleasure and a right hearty welcome. He led him to the apartment of the princess, who expressed as much joy at his return as if he were already her lawful husband. 'Dear Charoo,' said she, 'I do not know how I shall be able to prove to you my gratitude for so great a regard as you have shown for me in the hazardous task you have performed. I see from your face that you have succeeded. Please, then, disclose to me all you know. I am so impatient to hear it that I have not known a moment's rest since you left us, and I have been continually watching for your return. Let me now have the pleasure of listening to your adventures, in which there must be a great deal of the wonderful.' Charoo, being thus pressed, after acknowledging her love and sympathy, began his narrative. He had related about two-thirds, when the princess desired him to stop, saying she was perfectly satisfied, and declaring to the king her intention of receiving Charoo for her husband forthwith. Preparations were accordingly made, in a style befitting the occasion, for the celebration of the marriage.

"Had the Princess Chitrangee heard the whole relation of Charoo's adventures, she could not have fulfilled her promise of marrying him, as she would on the instant have

been removed from this world to the heavens, according to the words of Indra, who had said that so soon as she could gain a perfect account of the mountain of Chitrakoot, she would be restored to her former position. But this would have caused her to be faithless to her love; and she therefore cut him short when he had proceeded with but two-thirds of the narrative, intending to reserve the conclusion until she should feel disposed to put an end to her earthly career.

"The king caused great preparations to be made, and the whole city was soon in a tumult of joy at the news of the approaching nuptials. The day fixed for the union having at length arrived, it was solemnised with much pomp and splendour, and to the perfect satisfaction of all parties. The king presented his son-in-law on the occasion with half of his dominions, as a marriage portion, so great was his joy at the happy termination of his daughter's settlement in life. Charoo remained at the court of his father-in-law, and gained the affection and regard of the whole community by his complacency and affability.

"The newly-married couple lived comfortably together for some time. One day, however, Chitrangee's reflections turned on her former happy condition—the felicity she had enjoyed at Chitrakoot—and how she had always had the honor of being summoned to Indra's palace, where, in the society of angels and celestial beings, she had no wish left unaccomplished. Compared to *that*, her present life was a mere blank. She therefore resolved on returning thither and resuming her former state, and with that view she requested Charoo, who happened to be in the room with her, to relate to her the whole of his adventures at the Chitrakoot mountain, as she had a great desire to hear them. Poor Charoo, unsuspicious of the consequences, proceeded at once to satisfy her; he loved her so fondly, so passionately, that even had he divined the effect of his recital, it is more than doubtful whether he could have withstood her entreaties: He had barely finished the narrative of his adventures

when his wife fell as it were into a swoon, and immediately expired in his arms. Charoo thought she had merely fainted, so he endeavoured by every means in his power to restore her to animation, but to no purpose—she was past all remedy. He cried loudly for help, and the attendants poured in forthwith from every side, some of them hastening to acquaint the king with the sad disaster. The king and queen soon burst into the room together, wild with frenzy and grief. Charoo communicated the circumstances attending the demise, or swoon as he all along took it to be, of the princess. A physician was instantly sent for, who arrived in all haste, but in vain was everything done that art and experience, combined with great professional skill, could suggest. The whole place, as may be supposed, was plunged into inconsolable grief by this sad occurrence. The cries of Charoo rent the air, and the king and queen were loud in their lamentations. As soon as the news got abroad, the king's relatives, courtiers, and officials all flocked round the corpse of the beautiful princess, and not a dry eye was visible amongst the vast number of men and women there assembled. After their grief had a little subsided, preparations were made for the funeral, at which Charoo himself performed the ceremony of applying fire to the pile. The other obsequies, as usual on such an occasion, were continued for twelve days, according to the prescribed form.

"When Chitrangee's soul had re-entered her celestial frame on the Chitrakoot mountain, she awoke as though from a sound sleep, so sudden was the transition; and she began at once to enjoy, as she had done before, more perfect happiness than is ever known in the world, save in imagination. The people of the place were also freed from the temporary trance in which Charoo had found them when he visited the city; and they resumed their business exactly at the point at which it was discontinued when their animation had been suspended. Charoo's disarrangement of the shopkeepers' goods caused now a disagreement between the

respective owners, and they complained to Chitrangee. They had seen who did the mischief, though powerless to prevent it; they accordingly told Chitrangee that a certain young man had been there who had confused and mixed their goods, and had even wantonly destroyed some property, and they appealed to her for justice. She smiled, and advised them to divide their goods equally, instead of disputing or quarrelling about them, and thus she brought the matter to an amicable settlement. Chitrangee knew very well that it was Charoo who had done it, as he was the only one who had visited her dominions during her absence.

"When the funeral obsequies of Chitrangee were over, Charoo gave himself up to uncontrollable grief. Every object in his apartment reminded him of her whom he adored. He sighed as often as he beheld them, and amid a flood of tears gave vent to his feelings in the following and similar words, uttered in a thrilling and heartrending tone:—'Oh my beloved princess! my charming angel! my ever dear and chaste wife!—why leave me thus lonely and desolate in the midst of wealth and splendour? How unaccountable to me is your sudden transition! I am left to deplore your loss, without a single source of consolation —without one ray of hope!' He frequently fell into long swoons, and on recovering from one of these, for about the twentieth time, he thought within himself how useless and even painful it would be for him to remain there any longer, now that he was bereft of his greatest stay in life—his beloved and unequalled consort. He showed daily the most unequivocal signs of a broken and bleeding heart, and at last he determined to visit the friendly hermit, and to acquaint him with the affliction with which he had been visited. He accordingly applied to the king his father-in-law for permission to depart, who was struck with the worn-out and dismal aspect he presented. 'Alas, dear Charoo!' said the afflicted monarch, 'I am sorry to learn your determination to leave me in my affliction. From the moment I first beheld you I was disposed to esteem and respect

you, for your looks and dignified demeanour won my affection. Being now old and infirm, and without an heir to succeed me, I feel great pleasure and gratification in offering you the crown. I have now only one daughter left to be the solace of my declining years: her beauty and accomplishments are like those of her departed sister, and worthy of a prince or of a person of your exalted qualifications and worth. Instead of leaving me, then, stay and receive her hand and the crown which I now offer to you. It is time for me to rest from the labour of ruling these dominions. I have borne it long enough; and nothing could give me greater satisfaction, under the circumstances, than to entrust the well-being of my people to your hands, and to see you ruling in my stead, for I am satisfied that you are worthy in every respect of so responsible a trust. If you refuse, dear Charoo, to comply with my request, it will grieve me nearly as much as did the loss of my beloved daughter Chitrangee, and I cannot but sink under the double stroke, if I may so call it. Decide at once,—whether you will doom me to death, or, by your aid and solace, in some degree assuage the violence of my grief.' Charoo felt much afflicted at the sad situation of the aged monarch, but he had at the same time fully made up his mind to visit the hermit, and, by unbosoming his sorrows to him, seek consolation from his learned counsel. He felt as though nothing short of the advice of such a man could tranquillise his mind; he patiently listened, however, to all the king had to say, and then addressed him in these words:—'Sire, in the first place I am under a deep debt of gratitude to you for all you have done—for the immense favors and honors you have conferred on me. I thank you most sincerely and from the depth of my heart, and will not fail to implore heaven to return to you a thousand-fold the wealth and honor you have lavished on me,—that every species of blessing may attend you throughout life,—that your enemies may be confounded,—and that a long and prosperous life may be allotted to you. I am too deeply

wounded in this heart of mine by the death of my adored wife, to find any relief by entering into the government of these vast dominions,—in fact, just at present I feel myself quite incapable of undertaking so great and responsible a task. You will therefore, I trust, excuse me. It pains me much, after what you have said, to add to your griefs by my refusal of the proffered crown, but I do not feel myself justified in accepting it while aware of the impossibility of my being able to acquit myself in a manner worthy of yourself, the enlightened people of the land, and of my own personal dignity. I beg your majesty will not importune me any further on this subject, as I have now assigned my reasons for setting my heart against it. My resolution has been taken,—I must set out; and your permission to do so is all I now seek.' The king at last, though much against his will, agreed to let Charoo have his own way. Their parting was very affecting, and tasked the firmness of both. At length, with mutual expressions of consolation, and with many fond embraces, they parted, Charoo directing his steps towards the hermit's lonely dwelling.

CHAPTER XIV.

Continuation of the tale—Being interrupted by the Princess Padmavuntty, Veytal relates the story of the Angel of the Sea and the Two Birds.

"It would be difficult to conceive the extent of the grief which weighed down Charoo at being compelled to refuse the generous and disinterested offer his father-in-law had made him—that of the crown and the hand of his youngest daughter Soondra.* As he wended his lonely way in prosecution of his journey, he scarcely noticed external objects, so fully absorbed was he in contemplation of past events, and of the bereavement under which he was then suffering. His days were spent in tears and lamentations, and his nights in restless inquietude. The image of his wife was ever before his eyes; and he travelled along for a time without any settled purpose, and without knowing whither he went. At length he collected his scattered thoughts, and directed his steps towards the city of Badrikadar. Having arrived there, he hastened to the hermit's cell, there to unburden himself of his load of grief, in the hope of finding relief. He prostrated himself, as was customary, at the hermit's feet, and then at once entered into a relation of his distressing case, at the conclusion of which he besought the venerable man's advice. The hermit, after a long silence, during which he carefully weighed in his mind the circumstances related, directed Charoo to visit once more the friendly geese, and by their aid make another journey to the Chitrakoot mountain, where he would doubtlessly discover a solution of the mystery in which the sudden death of the princess his wife was shrouded, and

* Signifying, *Handsome.*

perhaps gain some information which would enable him to find her. Charoo sincerely thanked the hermit, and after receiving his blessing, set out again towards Himonchul. When he arrived at the summit of the hill, he did not pause until he had reached the Vur tree occupied by the royal birds. He was again received by them as before, with welcome and kind regard; they addressed him as an old friend and acquaintance. The disconsolate Charoo, after the usual salutations and a due acknowledgment of their invaluable aid and kind solicitude, informed them of all that had occurred to him since he had been last with them, and dwelt long on the painful loss of his beautiful and much-loved wife. The birds deeply sympathised with him, and desired him to moderate his grief, offering at the same time every assistance in their power to lessen the weight of his affliction. They voluntarily offered to transport him to the Chitrakoot mountain, and said that they would wait his convenience and pleasure in bringing him back. Charoo was highly pleased, and in some degree restored to composure by so much civility and kindness, and he unfeignedly thanked them, in suitable terms.

"The following day, one of the birds went as usual for their food, taking with him the widowed Charoo, whom he conveyed safely to Chitrakoot, and before leaving him asked him whether he wished to return that day, or to remain on the mountain, so that he might call for him on his way home if necessary. Charoo replied that he did not know when he would be ready to return. 'I fear, however,' said he, 'that when I wish to do so I shall be unable to find you.' The bird told him not to be apprehensive on that account, for that they called there about noon every day, on their way to and from the celestial regions, and that when he felt inclined to return he need only come and wait there, and he would surely meet with one or other of them. Charoo thanked the friendly bird, and after having taken leave of him, proceeded to the town. He went into the same street in which he had exchanged the merchants'

goods, and was agreeably surprised to find the inhabitants once more in motion and engaged in their respective callings. Some of them, who recognised Charoo as the former offender, seized him, and a few even ill-treated him. At length they took him before their sovereign, who was no other than the beautiful Chitrangee, and addressed her in the following words :—' Good sovereign, we have this day seized the mischievous fellow who destroyed and commingled our property on a former occasion, and who is doubtless come again with the same evil intention. We appeal to you for justice, and trust you will punish him as he deserves.' Chitrangee looked at their prisoner, and at once recognised in him her husband Charoo. She was so over-joyed that she could hardly contain herself, so she desired the people to leave him there, promising them that she would see justice done. The prisoner was thereupon taken charge of by her attendants, and by her orders conducted to her private apartment. Charoo could not repress his surprise at the wonderful change he beheld in everything from what he saw on his former visit, and while he was revolving this in his mind, and trying to assign some cause for it, he was led away, not to prison, but to a richly-furnished apartment. He imagined that the sovereign who now treated him so kindly and the lady he saw on his last visit lying in the alcove asleep, and whose beauty made such a deep impression on him, were one and the same person. He was, however, soon after visited by the queen, attended by two slaves. Chitrangee could not help smiling when she saw Charoo gazing on her in evident confusion, as though he had been struck at first sight by her beauty. She on her part felt the deepest emotion, and, approaching her husband with tearful eyes, prostrated herself before him, saying, ' Dear Charoo !—I am agitated to tears with the unspeakable joy I experience at seeing you ! Your presence in this place is more acceptable to me than heaps of wealth or any amount of splendour. You have dispelled the darkness of my soul,—all is now light and blithesome within me ! You prove, by

thus coming to my place of residence, the force of your affection for me, and believe me, mine is not less!' 'I believe you,' replied Charoo, 'else why those tears—those tears of joy, and this eagerness and fond solicitude? I cannot doubt that you are my own Chitrangee, in a far more perfect form. But yet how cruelly have you not behaved to me, in pretending to expire! I have not had a moment's peace since our separation. Still, great as have been my sufferings, I have borne all with fortitude, for something within me whispered that we should some day meet again, though I never once expected it would be so soon. My tears hinder my saying more!' Charoo here wept copiously, and he felt refreshed thereby. Chitrangee asked pardon for the deception she had been guilty of, and informed Charoo of all the particulars regarding herself—how she had been condemned by Indra to live in the world, and by what means she had regained her former position. She was delighted indeed to see Charoo there, though she grieved to see the havoc which her separation from him had caused: he was but the shadow of his former self, owing to the uneasiness of mind he had suffered and the fatigues of his journey. Chitrangee lost no time, after full explanations had been given and received, in ordering a splendid bath to be prepared, where Charoo indulged in a luxury to which he had been for some time a stranger, after which she perfumed his person, and, having arrayed him in a complete suit of the richest materials, ornamented with the finest pearls and diamonds, conveyed him to a large hall, where they sat down together on a sandal-wood *zopala*,* Charoo feeling greatly improved, both in person and spirits, and the pleasure he experienced beaming from his sparkling eyes. The slaves were left standing at a distance from the happy couple, in order that they might converse more freely. When dinner was ready, they adjourned to another room, and there partook of it together, after which they sat

* A swinging cot.

conversing until a late hour in the evening, when they retired to rest.

"Four months soon slipped by, and still Charoo remained at Chitrakoot, in the enjoyment of every pleasure in its highest perfection. One day, while seated with his beloved Chitrangee, he observed that the palace in which they lived had seven stories. He had not noticed this before; he therefore desired Chitrangee to show them to him. She accordingly took him to the first of the upper stories, which was decorated with costly materials and splendid furniture of the greatest rarity. She then led him into another, and so on to the last. In each he found much to admire and a great deal to enquire about. When they came to the seventh story, Charoo saw a large *bherry** lying in a corner, and he asked Chitrangee to allow him to play on it. She, however, begged of him not to do so, saying that if the sound reached Indra's court, his majesty would instantly send for her. Charoo, regardless of this advice, took the sticks and began to play. Immediately after the sound had died away, a messenger arrived from the Amravutty,† intimating to Chitrangee that his majesty remembered her, and commanded her to attend forthwith at his royal mansion. She had no alternative but to obey; so she at once ordered her trumpeters and attendants to get ready. She then proceeded to her own apartment, and, having arrayed herself in her finest apparel, informed Charoo that she was going to Indra's palace, he having sent for her, owing to the sounding of the drum. 'I know,' said she, 'that he has sent for me to sing and dance before him, so I must go without demur. You will remain here until I return. I shall soon be back.' Charoo disliked being left alone, and expressed a desire to accompany her, but Chitrangee advised him not to present himself at the court of Indra, as she feared something might happen to cause

* A kettle-drum.

† The paradise of Indra.

their separation again. 'Did I not,' said she in conclusion, 'forbid you to beat the drum?' Notwithstanding all she said, Charoo obstinately determined to go with her, and asked her to transform him into a fly, and to take him on her bosom. She could not refuse to do this, and in this manner they went to the Amravutty. When they arrived there, Chitrangee found that Indra's court was full of angels and other spiritual beings. She proceeded to pay her homage to Indra in the usual form, and then took her allotted place among the others. The angels were much disconcerted at the sight of Chitrangee's beauty, for in that respect she far excelled them all. Indra bade her be seated, and then with much attention and solicitude enquired after her health and condition. She replied that she was very happy, through his generosity and liberality. After a few more questions, which were appropriately replied to, he desired her to sing. She bowed her head in token of obedience, and then commenced singing, with such eloquent pathos and sweetness as to ravish the ears of all present. Indra himself was completely under Chitrangee's influence, so great an effect did her song produce on him. She continued singing in the same admirable strain till near the conclusion, when all at once her voice unfortunately failed her, and all the effect she had before produced was lost in the ridicule created by this mishap. Indra became highly incensed at this, and passionately exclaimed, 'O thou wicked woman! unworthy of the honor I have deigned to bestow on you!—go hence, and be transformed into a black mountain of sixty *yojuns* in length, in the province of Marwar.' He had scarcely ended these words, when poor Chitrangee fell into a swoon, on recovering from which she addressed Indra, with trembling and fear, in the most moving terms. 'Oh, my gracious lord!' said she, 'do not, I entreat you, punish me so rigorously for the offence I have unwittingly committed! Be merciful, and I promise never more to be guilty of the like! I repent of it, and will be more careful for the future.' Indra was moved by her strong appeal,

and considering that she had but just returned from undergoing his former sentence of punishment, said, 'Fear not!—you will soon be relieved; for if the mountain be broken to pieces, you will be restored to your enjoyments, and once more admitted into my palace.' Again bowing her head, she returned to her abode in deep concern, as she could not, she knew, expect any further mitigation than had been already vouchsafed her. The first thing she did on her return home was to restore Charoo to his former shape, and inform him of the decree that had been passed against her by Indra. Charoo regretted exceedingly the folly he had been guilty of, in beating the drum, which had resulted in such woeful consequences. However, he told her not to be disheartened, but to place her reliance on God, who is both powerful and merciful, and would most assuredly save her from the impending evil. 'I will also,' continued he, 'strive my utmost to be of service to you.' After this dialogue they sat down to eat, but they could not swallow their food, for their hearts were heavy. The whole of the day was spent in vain regrets and sad reflections. At night they retired to bed as usual, but as soon as Chitrangee fell asleep she became inanimate, and at that very instant the black mountain was to be seen in the province of Marwar, as Indra had willed. Moreover, the whole population of Chitrangee's dominions were once more thrown into the state in which Charoo found them when he visited that place on the first occasion,—motionless, though with the full use of their senses. Charoo, as a human being, was the only one who had not fallen under this general visitation of Indra's ire. He arose early next morning, and surveyed the town and all in it with wondering eyes and a failing heart. He thought it would be impossible for him to remain there any longer, without a single living creature with whom he could converse, so he repaired to the place to which the bird had directed him if he wanted any aid. He had not been there long when he saw the bird coming in that direction, loaded with the celestial fruits. Charoo

saluted the bird, and when asked whether it was his intention to return, he replied in the affirmative. The bird desired him to sit on his back as before, and in the shortest possible time he was once more transported to the abode of the royal geese, who received him with a hearty welcome, and regaled him in the best possible manner. He spent that night in their company, and the next morning, after returning suitable thanks to them, he set forward on his journey.

"In a few days he arrived at the city of Badrikadar, and hastened to the hermit's cell, who had ever some advice in store for the unfortunate Charoo. He related all that had occurred to him since his last visit, after which the hermit told him that there was a certain king in Marwar whose dominions were very extensive. 'The black mountain into which Chitrangee has been transformed must be in his territory,' said he; 'go therefore to his court, in the guise of a Mahaunt,* and tell him that a new black mountain has just sprung up in his kingdom, which will daily increase, and in time not only cover his whole realm, but will also kill all the inhabitants, without a single exception. This will throw him into great consternation, and I have no doubt he will ask your advice as to what steps he ought to adopt to prevent the evil; you can then tell him he must employ a large number of masons and stonecutters to hew it down.' Thanking the hermit for this piece of friendly advice, Charoo set out for Marwar.

"When he arrived he saw the mountain situated there: it was of a jet black colour. He crossed about sixteen *yojuns* to the southward, and entered the king's court, where he was very kindly received. When the counterfeit Mahaunt had represented fully the mischief that would accrue by the increase of the black mountain, the king exhibited much astonishment and fear. After in vain trying to devise in his own mind some means to avert the danger, he asked the

* A devotee.

Mahaunt's advice, who answered thus:—'Is there not a minister or an astrologer at your majesty's court, who can by his judgment and wisdom suggest some plan? If there be none such, my advice would be that you employ immediately a large number of stonecutters and labourers to hew down the mountain, and thus save your kingdom from the utter ruin with which it is threatened. Be not apprehensive, but act as I have now suggested.' The king asked the minister why he had not mentioned to him the sudden appearance of the mountain, and appeared much enraged. The minister begged his majesty's pardon, and without any loss of time employed a great many stonecutters and others to demolish the black mountain. Next day the king set off to see it, accompanied by the Mahaunt, the minister, and some other officials, and was much astonished at its size and peculiar colour. The labourers were all very busy, cutting it away piecemeal; and there seemed a fair chance of its being speedily removed altogether, to judge from the great number of men employed. The Mahaunt was very liberally entertained for some time by the king and his courtiers, as a benefactor who had by his timely notice and advice saved their country from ruin. At length he asked for permission to depart, which gave the king much concern, as he would fain have retained him in the palace. With this view the king said he would confer on him the honors and emoluments of his minister, to which the Mahaunt replied, 'I have no inclination whatever to remain, however exalted the position you may allot to me. I was on my way to Swethbund Rameshwer on a pilgrimage, when I saw the great evil which was impending over your kingdom; I therefore turned from my way to acquaint you with it. It is the duty of every man to act thus when it lies in his power.' The king and his courtiers conceived a great regard and veneration for this Mahaunt, and they pressed him very much to accept different costly presents, all of which, however, he firmly declined. The king then thanked him in the most grateful manner, and said he had been instrumental, under Providence, in

saving the lives and properties of all his subjects, by which he had placed each and all of them under the greatest of obligations to him. A large retinue was ordered to attend him on his departure, the king himself following him out of the city, where, after having once more renewed his acknowledgments, they parted, with many kind expressions of sympathy and regard.

"As soon as the black mountain had been demolished, and the place where it had stood made into a level plain, Chitrangee arose from her couch, on which she had lain inanimate since the night after her return from Indra's palace; and at the same time the whole capital once more recovered from its death-like state. Chitrangee rejoiced that her punishment had been but of short duration, and she eagerly looked forward to the arrival of her beloved Charoo. The latter, as may be supposed, made all possible haste to reach Badrikadar, and on his arrival there he informed the hermit of his success. He remained with him for a few days, being greatly worn out by his journey, after which, having recruited his strength, he proceeded to the Himonchul mountain, where he again met with the royal birds, who were glad to see him. Next day he was conveyed to Chitrakoot, as he desired, and after thanking the friendly bird who had transported him on his back, he entered the town, at the improved aspect of which he was once more delighted, as well as with the happy condition in which he found all the inhabitants. Chitrangee, who was hourly expecting Charoo, perceived him at a distance, and she ran and embraced him with great joy and affection. After a short repose, he acquainted her with his adventure, and by what means he had obtained her release. Chitrangee renewed her fond and endearing caresses, and praised him for his tact and ability."

The Princess Pudmavuntty here interrupted the Rajhouse, and observed how wonderful it was that a goose—a bird of such small dimensions and physical powers—could rise into

the air with Charoo on her back, and convey him such a distance. "Do not be surprised at that, my good and gracious lady," replied the Rajhouse; "I am glad to observe your spirit of enquiry, and I will satisfy you that the Sarjah rides on the goose, the Kartick Swamy on the peacock, and Vishnoo on the Garood.* These birds ascend with their riders on their backs, with such speed and velocity that in a very short time they traverse great distances. Permit me to relate to your highness an unheard-of story on the subject.

THE STORY OF THE ANGEL, OR SOVEREIGN RULER OF THE SEA, AND THE TWO BIRDS CALLED TITVI.†

"There lived at one time a pair of birds called Titvi, who inhabited a certain locality on the sea-shore, where they were spending their days in peace and plenty. One day the birds went out, leaving their nest unprotected, and in it some eggs on which the female bird was at that time sitting. A malicious frog, who had conceived a hatred against them, availed himself of their absence to steal the eggs, out of mere spite, and took them away to his abode, in a hole under a rock by the sea-shore. When the birds returned to their nest, they were much grieved to find their eggs missing, and they became very disconsolate. Looking about them, they saw the print of the frog's feet on the sand, and from this they were convinced that he was the thief. Having made this discovery, the female bird said to her companion, 'We have been deprived of our eggs by a mean despicable frog who lives near us: shall we not go to the angel who is the sovereign ruler of the sea, and complain to him of the injury that has been done us?' 'Certainly!' replied the male bird. So they applied to the angel, in a most humble and supplicatory manner, for the restoration of their eggs, but he gave little heed to their represen-

* The bird and vehicle of Vishnoo. He is generally represented as the king of the birds.

† A bird, *Parra Jacana*, or *Goensis*.

tations. The poor birds were very much dissatisfied with the manner in which the angel treated their complaint, and they returned to their dwelling more disconsolate than ever. While sitting brooding over their ill-fortune, they hit upon the following expedient, by way of retaliation on the angel ruler: 'Let us,' said they, 'dry up the water from the sea, so that the subjects of the angel may suffer thirst for his having refused to attend to our just prayers.' Having resolved upon this, they set about it in right good earnest, and with their little beaks, drop after drop, they commenced emptying the ocean. They had not been long employed in this manner when Narud Moonee* happened to pass by, to whom they represented their grievances. Moonee assured the birds that he would procure them every satisfaction, and said, 'Do not disturb yourselves, but be easy in your minds. Depend on me: I will endeavour to have your eggs safely restored to you.' This assurance delighted the birds, and they continued their task with great energy. The Moonee, after being made fully acquainted with the grievances of the Titvis, bent his steps towards the residence of the chief of the birds. When he arrived there he began by stating that the angel ruler of the sea was so haughty and proud that he scrupled not to allow the greatest indignities to be offered to the noble family of birds; he then entered into an explanation of the cause which led him thither—namely, the grievous wrong sustained by the Titvis. He also made the following observations:—'It would be a glorious action on your part to out-brave a power you can no longer revere. Now, let me see how you will resent the insult offered to your race by the angel ruler of the sea. For a frog, the meanest of the mean, to have perpetrated this outrage on any of your subjects, detracts much from your honor.' The Garood, as tenacious of his rights over his subjects as he was revengeful by nature, set out with

* The son of Brahma, and one of the ten original Moonі or Rishee. He delighted in exciting quarrels.

the Moonee, accompanied by the chiefs of the birds and their families, to the sea-shore, where they found both the Titvis engaged in the difficult exploit of drying up the sea. They all fell to, and simultaneously commenced to aid the efforts of the outraged birds. They also forcibly and unsparingly seized with their sharp talons the largest fishes of the deep, and thus spread death and ruin around. The angel, perceiving the immense loss of his subjects, and the innumerable host opposed to him, was so intimidated that he approached the Garood in the most abject terror, and requested a truce, which was granted after an ample apology had been tendered to the Titvis, and their eggs restored to them uninjured.

"This example," continued the Rajhouse, "serves to show that birds are not to be despised as a weak race. They are endowed by nature with the power of traversing the wide expanse of air, and they are capable of achieving great ends, even that of resenting any wanton or cruel injury inflicted on them." To the Rajhouse, Charoo on the back of the goose seemed but as a pebble set on a mountain.

CHAPTER XV.

Veytal concludes his story and disappears—King Vickramadeten celebrates the marriage of Prince Duntsain with the Princess Pudmavuutty, after which he departs from their palace with the brahmin Somedut, who is still in the form of a parrot.

"THREE months of uninterrupted happiness, and the enjoyment of every kind of pleasure, were experienced by Charoo and his beloved spouse on the Chitrakoot mountain. At the end of that time, being one day on the uppermost story of their palace, viewing the surrounding scenery and the vast extent of the city, Charoo was struck with the sight of the celestial birds and trees which surrounded the palace. At the same time, happening to look towards the *bherry*, which stood close beside him, he felt a strong inclination to play on it again. He addressed his wife, and asked her to join him in doing so, but she refused, well knowing the consequences that would result therefrom. She remained silently watching him, not deigning to give him any further answer. Charoo took up the two sticks that were attached to the *bherry*, and commenced sounding it. While engaged in this amusement, the sound reached Amravutty, and was heard by Indra, who immediately felt an inclination to hear the melodious singing of the lovely Chitrangee, so he ordered his attendants to summon her to his presence. One of the attendants accordingly set out to convey the order to Chitrangee, and having arrived at her palace and communicated his royal master's wishes, he requested her to lose no time in obeying them. She immediately went into her apartment, gorgeously dressed and bedecked herself, and was about to set off with the messenger, but before leaving her palace she addressed Charoo as follows:—'I pray you, dear Charoo, to remain here until I return from the court of

Indra, to whose palace I have the honor of being invited.' The manner in which she addressed Charoo was at first somewhat distant, but her regard and affection for him overcame every other feeling, and she informed him that she would use her utmost endeavours to please Indra by playing the most charming and pleasant airs she knew, that they might captivate the monarch and ensure for her a safe and speedy return; but if, on the contrary, Indra should be displeased with her, she must only submit patiently to whatever he might think fit to inflict upon her. Charoo, on hearing this, was greatly alarmed, and would on no account be left behind: he insisted on going with her, and she was at last prevailed upon to agree to it. She therefore transformed him into a Bhrumer,* thereby enabling him to accompany her without being noticed. They accordingly entered the palace of Indra together, and found the monarch seated in the *subha*, surrounded by innumerable angels. On approaching him, Chitrangee prostrated herself, and then stood apart, with her eyes cast on the ground. Indra commanded her to be seated, and having enquired about her health, made known to her the reason why she had been sent for, which was that he might hear her sing and see her perform before him. She bowed low, and proceeded to gratify him, by commencing to sing in such a bewitching tone of voice as to charm Indra and the whole court. In addition to this, she intermingled extempore passages in her song, descriptive of the virtue and amiable qualities of Indra, which secured his approbation, as much by her words as by the sweetness of her voice and the graceful movements of her delicate and lovely form. The angels, likewise, who surrounded the person of Indra, seemed to enjoy the scene exceedingly: they were lost in admiration of the sylph-like movements and musical tones of Chitrangee,—so much so, that they looked like so many marble statues, so steadfastly and silently did they gaze on

* A large black bee.

her. Her singing elicited the highest applause, and afforded the greatest enjoyment to Jupiter, Mars, and Venus.

"The first song was followed by others not less acceptable, both from the sentiments they expressed, the feeling which they evinced, and the sweet voice in which they were sung. She produced a great sensation on the present occasion, and much emotion in the breasts of all there assembled, until at last she committed an error in omitting one verse of the last song, which was immediately detected by Indra. The angels also murmured at the omission. Indra was enraged at this, and expressed his anger as follows:—'Oh thou wretched and negligent woman, who vainly attemptest to please!—it were far better that thou wert a rock in the midst of the ocean than that thou shouldst again present thyself before me!' He had scarcely delivered himself of this awful judgment than Chitrangee fell into a swoon, and dropped heavily to the ground. After a time she came to herself, when the recollection of what she had heard from the lips of Indra rushed into her mind with all its horror. She knelt before him, and in a most lamentable tone cried, 'Oh, most mighty monarch! ruler of the heavens!—thy power extends to the utmost limits of these celestial realms, and before thee every crowned head bows in obedience! Be pleased to extend thy mercy and clemency to thine unfortunate servant! Pardon her fault, and relieve her from the dreadful sufferings to which thou hast doomed her! Even the wife of Gowtum Rishee, who was doomed by her husband to remain within a rock for a period of sixty thousand years, had her sentence revoked, and was again received into favor. Deign, then, to extend to me thy mercy! Thou hast from my infancy retained me in thy especial service, and hast conferred on me the sovereignty of Chitrakoot: thou surely wilt not now condemn me to the torments I must suffer in the fathomless depths of the sea! Permit me, great sovereign, to continue in the enjoyment of thy bounty!'

"Chitrangee's prayers and entreaties had no effect

whatever on Indra, as he did not appear in the least moved by her distress: she therefore sought other means for appeasing his anger. She approached Jupiter, who was seated close by, and addressed him in a very earnest manner. 'Oh, Gooru!' said she, 'high and noble being! —who receives the adoration of both men and angels, for your occult knowledge and deep wisdom!—I pray you graciously to use your influence and interest with the mighty Indra, to obtain for me a reversal of the sentence which has been passed upon me!' Jupiter was touched by her passionate appeal, and addressed Indra with much eloquent energy. He gained his point so far as to obtain a great mitigation of the sentence; for Indra, turning to Chitrangee, said, 'Oh, thou bewitching woman!—be of good cheer! Thou shalt regain thy present form and enjoyments when the rays of the sun shall fall upon thee!' This in a great measure dispelled Chitrangee's grief, and she thanked Indra sincerely, sighing deeply, however, to find that the pleading of Jupiter on her behalf had not proved more effectual. Indra heard the sigh, and questioned her about it. 'Why art thou so dejected?' said he. Chitrangee replied, 'O gracious monarch!—I cannot but fear that, according to thy decision, I shall be immersed under water, and I am unable to conceive how the sun is to shine on me there. I therefore stand but a poor chance of being released from the sea if I am once placed there.' 'Be easy in thy mind,' replied Indra; 'the person who has always aided thee will endeavour to help thee on this occasion also.' Chitrangee was somewhat consoled at these words, as she placed the most implicit reliance on what Indra said. Shortly afterwards she took her leave, prostrating herself once more before him, and proceeded to her dwelling.

"Chitrangee returned to Chitrakoot, and again changed Charoo into his original shape; she also told him, with much indignation, what had occurred at Indra's court, and the punishment she had to undergo in consequence. She felt very keenly the indignity that had been offered to her,

and regretted, equally with Charoo, their approaching separation. 'My beloved Charoo,' said she, 'I do not know how long I shall remain entombed in the ocean, nor how I am to be released from that position. Indra has, however, pledged his royal word that I shall not have to remain long there, but I cannot banish my doubts.' Charoo was deeply affected at the excessive grief of Chitrangee, and he tried to soothe her by citing several moral examples and arguments. 'My dearest love,' said he, 'do not give yourself up to grief. Consider the infinite power of God, who can do all things, and can devise means of relief when none are apparent to us, blind mortals as we are. Resign yourself, therefore, to Him; be hopeful and patient, and He will, in his own good time, bring about the completion of all we can desire. It is to Him alone that we should address ourselves in our misfortune.' Charoo thus contrived to restore Chitrangee's mind to some degree of tranquillity, and they then sat down together and partook of their usual repast. The whole of that day was spent by Chitrangee in bewailing her hard lot, and by Charoo in consoling her by trying to impart to her courage and patience; he also assured her that he would not rest a moment until she was emancipated from her dreadful condition. After supper they retired for the night as usual. Chitrangee, troubled and uneasy in her mind, thought of nothing but her coming fate, but at length she fell asleep, and, as before, remained inanimate. Charoo was very sanguine in the belief that he should succeed in devising means to regain his beloved and affectionate wife, though there were times when his heart wholly failed him as he contemplated the awful condition to which she was now reduced. He felt that he could not of himself be of any service to her,—it was from others that he must look for aid, and even that was an uncertainty, at the best; however, he offered up a long and earnest prayer for help and guidance to the Supreme Ruler of the universe. He slept not a wink that night, so great was his anxiety, and at dawn, when he rose, he found the city and all in it,

excepting himself, in the same paralysed condition as on the two former occasions. He suffered much self-reproach as he reflected that all these misfortunes were owing to his inconsiderate conduct in playing upon the *bherry*, but he also remembered that what was done could not be undone, —his only course now was to set about remedying the evil as much as lay in his power. He accordingly left the palace, taking with him five valuable jewels, and proceeded to where he was accustomed to meet his friend the royal bird. At the usual hour of noon it made its appearance, and after saluting each other, they sat down and discoursed together for some time. Charoo felt abashed at being so often compelled to seek the assistance of the obliging geese; his friend, however, guessed what was in his mind, and asked him, when their conversation was ended, whether he desired to be taken back,—if so, he had only to say the word and it would be done. Charoo felt very grateful, and at once accepted the offer, at the same time apologising earnestly for the trouble he was giving them. 'My good friend,' said the bird, 'there is not the least inconvenience or annoyance involved in the task: we are ready and willing at all times to be of service to man, and we feel a great pleasure in such acts; the obligation may be said to be conferred *on us* by those who afford us such opportunities of evincing our charity and good feeling. Do not, therefore, scruple to command us, whenever you stand in need of assistance. Make haste, then, and place yourself on my back: I will speedily transport you to our abode.' Charoo did as he was bid, and the bird took his flight through the air with such incredible swiftness that he alighted with his burden at their destination almost instantly.

"Charoo found himself once more in the company of the royal birds, who showed him every kindness and hospitality, as was their wont. They enquired after his health in the most affectionate manner, and then set before him a choice selection of celestial food. Charoo spent that day with the hospitable birds, and on the following morning continued

his journey. He travelled direct to the residence of his friend the Rishee,* and, after prostrating himself at his feet, disclosed to him the sad fate of Chitrangee, and how he was conjured by her to labour for her release. The Rishee paid great attention to what Charoo said, and after a short silence, during which he was communing with himself, he told him that he should go to Shree Ramashwer, and there entertain some brahmins and devotees on the most costly viands, taking care to secure the presence of men well acquainted with the Shastras†; that he should also throw a large quantity of dainty food into the sea daily, in the name of God, because there existed a certain class of fish in the sea who enjoyed especially the favor of heaven, whereby they were enabled to assume at times the form of human beings. 'I am confident,' continued he, 'that by this devout practice you will win the regard of those fishes, who will in the end help you to carry out your design. They, seeing your daily care in providing for them, will naturally enough endeavour to repay your kindness. They will appear in the guise of man, and you will only have to make known your wishes to meet with the desired success. Go, then, and set about it directly. Let me inform you that you cannot do a better action than distribute food to those who are in want of it. It is said, too, that to obtain a high character for virtue it is proper to bestow on the brahmins elephants, horses, cows, lands, gold, jewels, and more especially a daughter, if you are possessed of one; though these gifts are not to be compared to the bestowal of grain, as recommended in the divine law. I will briefly relate to you an instance of the charity of bestowing grain. There was once a nobleman named Kerna,‡ who was endowed with many good qualities; he was, however, parti-

* A saint of person of great sanctity.

† Sacred laws.

‡ King of Anga, and half brother to the Pandava princes, being the son of their mother Pritha, by the sun, before her marriage to Pandu.

cularly distinguished for his generous liberality, which in an especial manner secured him the esteem of all. He took a great delight in relieving the poor and needy, and many a family was indebted to him for their support and maintenance. No one who ever applied to him went back empty-handed. The greatest men and all the ruling sovereigns commended him for his charity; in short, there was none to be compared to him. On one occasion, this good man was lying on a bed of sickness, without any hope of recovery, having been wounded in a battle with the Kauravas, and every moment expecting that death would put an end to his sufferings. In this state Vishnoo* appeared to him, in the shape of a brahmin, and said, "O thou noble and generous man!—I have heard of thy fame far and wide—that thou art just and liberal to all—and thy praise is in every mouth. Being destitute and in want of even the necessaries of life, I am emboldened to address thee, and trust thou wilt, with thy usual generosity, aid me in my difficulties. Such an act of benevolence will secure for thee undying bliss." The sick nobleman was much moved by this appeal, but he could not rise from his bed, so severely and dangerously had he been wounded; his understanding was nevertheless perfect. He was very desirous of bestowing something on the brahmin, but had nothing at the time within his reach; he remembered, however, that two jewels had at a former period been placed in his teeth, so he said to the brahmin, "My good man, I pray you be kind enough to take a little stone and with it knock out gently the two jewels you will find fastened in my teeth; take them for your use, and depart in peace. I have no doubt that by disposing of them you will be enabled to supply your wants." The pretended brahmin replied, "I do not like to pluck out the jewels with my own hand; do it thyself, and then present them to me; I shall otherwise go without them." "I beseech you, good brahmin," said the noble-

* One of the three principal Hindu gods.

man with much earnestness, "stay a moment!" and without loss of time he raised himself a little with much difficulty, and, taking a piece of stone, knocked out the jewels from where they had been placed, and held them towards the brahmin, but lo! the god had disappeared! and instead of him was seen Vishnoo, in his natural form, the rays which illuminated his countenance lighting up the whole room, who, with pleasure beaming from his eyes at the disinterestedness of the nobleman, said, "Oh, virtuous and munificent man!—ask for whatever thou wilt, without any reserve, as I am exceedingly pleased with thee for thy liberality and charitable disposition." "Great and merciful being!" cried Kerna, "what pangs of hunger have I not endured! All I ask of thee now is some food, that I may appease the cravings of my stomach." Vishnoo smiled, and said, "Thou hast been renowned during life for thy liberality in bestowing many things on the poor, but no food hast thou been known to give them: how then canst thou now expect food for thyself? But do not despair, but rely on me;—try and recollect whether thou hast on any occasion pointed with thine own hand to a place where a traveller might find food." Kerna thanked Vishnoo for reminding him of the circumstance, and said that one day, as he was proceeding to the king's palace in great haste, he met a travelling mendicant who asked to be directed to some place where he might obtain food and lodging for the night, and that he had pointed with his finger to a place where he doubtless procured both. Vishnoo then said, "Put into thy mouth the very same finger with which thou pointedst out the place, and thou wilt be relieved from hunger." Kerna instantly did as he was ordered, and a delicate and nourishing juice oozed out of his finger end, which completely satisfied his hunger. He thanked Vishnoo for such a miraculous interposition, and begged hard to be allowed to live a little longer in the world, that he might gratify his desire of supplying food to the poor. Vishnoo approved highly of this desire on the part of Kerna, and

told him that he would obtain another life in the person of Shreeyal, after which Vishnoo disappeared.' The Rishee, having ended this recital, added that the fame of Kerna had not become extinct even to that day. He again recommended Charoo to start immediately for the city of Shree Ramashwer, where he said he would obtain what he desired. Charoo accordingly set out, after partaking of a slight repast, and thanking the hermit most sincerely for his friendly advice.

"Charoo travelled along for many days until he arrived at the holy city, and a long and very tedious journey it proved to be. The first thing he did on his arrival was to perform his ablutions in the sea, and he afterwards visited the temple dedicated to Shree Ramashwer, where he worshipped the idol with much reverence and sincerity. He then formed an establishment in the most eligible locality, engaged men to prepare rich food and confectionaries, and invited daily a number of holy and devout brahmins to partake of them; he likewise distributed a sufficient quantity anong the poor and indigent, and a further quantity was also daily thrown into the sea, in the name of God, for the fishes; in short, he did all he had been instructed to do by the hermit. He continued this for a whole month, and at length the fishes who were fed daily assembled together in the sea, and resolved to recompense their benefactor to the utmost of their power." They decided that their chief should assume the human form, and present himself before their friend and benefactor. Accordingly, when Charoo came one day, as usual, to the beach to throw the food into the sea, the chief of the fishes came up and asked him how he could serve him, in return for his daily and profuse liberality to them. Charoo, not knowing his interrogator, passed him unnoticed, and after throwing in the food, bent his steps back to his dwelling. The chief, observing this, approached Charoo a second time, and made himself known, adding that if he refused them the satisfaction of showing their gratitude in some way,

they would no longer partake of the food. Charoo was alike astonished and delighted to see the chief of the fishes before him in the guise of a man; so he paid him some high compliments and then began to relate the whole of Chitrangee's misfortunes, which he acknowledged had been brought on by his own obstinacy, adding that he fed the fishes with the view of securing their aid to release his wife from her miserable bondage. 'Will you,' said Charoo, 'be good enough to tell me whether you or any of your tribe have found in your rambles a new rock? If so, you will confer a very great favor on me by bringing the rock to the shore, so that its surface may be exposed to the rays of the sun.' The chief of the fishes desired Charoo to wait for a few minutes, telling him that he would hasten back to him after making the necessary enquiries.

"The chief, having left Charoo on the sea-shore, proceeded to his friends in the deep, and enquired whether any of them had discovered a new rock in the sea. They having replied in the affirmative, he ordered them all to set about removing the rock to the beach or as near the shore as possible. Having given his orders he returned to Charoo, and acquainted him with the joyful intelligence that his comrades were even then engaged in removing the rock to the shore, and that by to-morrow he might expect to have his wishes realised. Charoo thanked him heartily for his trouble and civility, and added that he fully relied on the promise and assurance given by the chief, who shortly afterwards disappeared.

"Before it was quite day, Charoo made his appearance on the beach, bringing an additional quantity of the best description of food for the fishes. He looked towards the sea, but could see nothing of the rock, as it was very foggy; but in a little time he was agreeably surprised to find that the fishes had really removed the rock to the shore. In an extacy of delight he raised his hands to heaven, and thanked God for his mercy and the infinitude of his power. As he turned he beheld near him the chief of the fishes, whom he

also thanked, as it was to him personally that he was indebted for effecting this great and joyful surprise. He then thought of the hermit, whose advice he had followed, and in his heart thanked him with truth and sincerity. In a little time the sun rose in all his splendour in the east, and no sooner did his rays fall upon the rock than it gradually began to melt away, till nothing was left. Charoo now threw into the sea the food he had brought with him, on which the chief of the fishes approached him, to whom he expressed in glowing terms his sense of the service which had been rendered him by the fishes. 'I know,' said he, 'that but for the aid I have received I should not have succeeded in this enterprise, and I am therefore under no small obligation to you all.'

"The chief of the fishes now produced three rich and invaluable jewels, which he had brought with him from the deep, and presented them to Charoo, but the latter could not be persuaded to accept of them. He said that by God's grace he had many such at his command; and being greatly indebted to him already for the removal of the rock, it would, to say the least, be ungenerous in him to accept presents from one to whom it would be far more becoming in him to make them. The chief smiled, and said, 'What is your idea, then, of the jewels I now offer you? They are very rare, and greatly excel in their quality any you can by any possibility be possessed of. This jewel,' said he, holding out one of them, 'if worshipped and worthily reverenced, will supply you with several kinds of dainties, and the best descriptions of food, in any quantity. The second will produce in the same manner immense treasure, and the third will, by merely holding it in your hand, transport you to any place to which you may wish to proceed, and that in a very short time.' Charoo, seeing the use of these extraordinary jewels, received them thankfully and with much pleasure; after which he embraced the chief of the fishes, affectionately took leave of him, and parted from him to return to his released wife.

"Charoo first went to his residence, and most sumptuously entertained the brahmins and devotees assembled there, presenting each of them with new clothes and abundance of money, after which he sent them away completely satisfied.

"No sooner was the rock dissolved by the rays of the sun, than Chitrangee awoke as from a sleep, simultaneously with the whole city and its population. She anxiously awaited the arrival of Charoo, for she was aware that to him alone was she indebted for her speedy restoration to life and consciousness.

"Charoo, on his part, was equally impatient to join his wife, and he thought how valuable the jewels presented by the chief of the fishes were at that moment. He held the proper one in his hand, and after having reverenced it, wished to be conveyed to the residence of the hermit, at Badrikadar. He was immediately transported there, in the twinkling of an eye, and he entered the hermit's cell and prostrated himself before him. He told him all that had occurred since they last parted, and of the three jewels which had been presented to him by the chief of the fishes, one of which enabled him to reach his hermitage in so brief a space of time. He also described the holy city of Shree Ramashwer, and its shrines. The hermit was highly pleased with the account given by Charoo, and with his success: he heaped blessings upon his head, and told him that he should be always successful in his undertakings. Charoo thanked the hermit for this mark of his love, and acknowledged the many benefits he had received at his hands. The hermit desired Charoo to proceed at once to Chitrakoot, as Chitrangee would no doubt be eagerly expecting him, whereupon he took his leave, with many expressions of gratitude and obedience. Charoo did not now require the aid of the friendly geese to transport him to Chitrakoot. He reverenced the jewel which the chief of the fishes had presented to him, and, holding it in his hand, desired to be taken to the palace of his wife.

He had scarcely done so when he found himself transported thither.

"Chitrangee anxiously counted the hours that would be required for Charoo to travel from Ramashwer to Badrikadar, and from thence to Himonchul. She was contemplating the dreadful hardships and privations he would have to encounter on the way, when he was suddenly seen to advance towards her dwelling. She rose with much joy, and advanced to meet him: they embraced each other with much affection, and then retired to the privacy of their room, where, in the mutual exchange of those kind offices which true love dictates, they spent many hours. Chitrangee asked Charoo how he had contrived to return so soon, and how he had managed to release her. Charoo satisfied her on these points by recounting his adventures, and he then produced the jewels presented to him by the chief of the fishes.

"They lived again happily together for three months, without anything occurring to disturb their tranquillity. About this time Charoo felt himself impelled by some invisible agency to play on the *bherry* again. He went up to that part of the palace where it was placed, in company with his wife, and spent some time in admiring the wealth and grandeur with which they were surrounded. He fully appreciated his happy condition, and considered himself the most fortunate of created beings, for he was in the full enjoyment of every celestial blessing. 'How kindly has God allotted to us this wonderful residence!' said he; 'men in the world in vain strive by strict morality and untainted virtue to attain to anything like this: it is denied to the best of them. It is only to be attained at the end of their earthly career!' He was so pleased with himself and with everything in and around the place, that in the exuberance of his delight he approached the *bherry* and signed to Chitrangee that he would like to play upon it. She smiled, but did not oppose him, in consideration of the obligations she was under to him. Charoo therefore took the sticks and began to play loudly.

"Indra was amazed to hear the unusual violence with which the *bherry* was being sounded, and he at once directed one of his attendants to invite Chitrangee to the court. The messenger immediately carried the order to her, and she desired him to wait awhile, that she might prepare for the visit. She adorned herself, but in a dejected mood, for she dreaded the result, not knowing how to escape Indra's wrath in case she should incur it. She desired Charoo to permit her to go alone, but he said, 'No, I will not allow you to go unless I accompany you in my present shape, as I am resolved to assist you in your music and singing on this occasion. I shall disguise myself as your Moordoongy.* I know how to play; in fact I excel in it.' So earnest was Charoo in his request, that Chitrangee could not refuse him, so she repaired to Indra's *subha* with Charoo. She prostrated herself as usual before Indra, and then took up her position as on the former occasions. Shortly after she was called upon to commence her singing and dancing. She prepared to obey, by putting all her instruments in order; she then began to sing the victories of Indra and of his divine angels and demi-gods, in such a manner that their souls were enraptured, recalling as it did their triumphs over the Dyetas.† They applauded her very much, and seemed altogether under the influence of her magical performance. Chitrangee then changed her mode of singing. She took the *vena*, an instrument in which she excelled, and played upon it with such exquisite sweetness, as an accompaniment to her singing, that she completely astounded her audience. The melody of the music and the almost imperceptible modulations of her voice—by turns rising to the highest pitch and then sinking into the most delightful softness—were truly astonishing. To this was added the sparkle of her brilliant eyes, which spoke in language more expressive than either her voice or the instrument on which she executed the entrancing love song.

* A player upon the oblong drum.

† The Titants, or giants of Hindu mythology.

"Indra was so captivated by her performance that he seemed to devour her with his eyes. 'Never before,' he exclaimed, 'have I been so completely overcome by the charms of a woman, nor have I ever heard such heart-thrilling sounds or eloquent language. With what feeling does she pourtray the soft sentiment of love!' Chitrangee was assisted in her performance by Charoo, and it was no doubt the presence of her husband and lover which enabled her to display such an unusual flow of feeling and eloquence. Whatever may have been the cause, certain it is that she acquitted herself in a manner beyond all precedent, and, as has been already said, elicited the encomiums of all the celestial beings there assembled. Each and all of them paid her much attention, and extolled her skill and ability, as well as her personal beauty and attractions. Indra was so much delighted that he took a necklace of pearls from his own neck, and presented it to her before she had fairly concluded her captivating song. Chitrangee received it with much respect, and immediately placed it round Charoo's neck. Indra, observing this, asked her who he was, when she modestly replied, 'Most gracious sovereign! he is the husband who was destined for me in the world below, and I married him when I was a princess, according to your majesty's first sentence on me. He came in search of me to Chitrakoot, after I had re-assumed my celestial frame; and he it was, to my great good fortune, who rescued me on the three different occasions I incurred your majesty's displeasure and fell under your curse. He had to suffer great toil and fatigue on my account. Indeed, my lord,' added she, 'he was the sole happy instrument of my protection.' 'Oh, celestial beauty! I am exceedingly delighted to hear this account of your beloved,' replied Indra; 'as he has so completely devoted himself to you, he is worthy of my warmest regard and esteem. Let him ask of me whatever he pleases, I will bestow it upon him with great pleasure and satisfaction.' Charoo, hearing all this, came forward and prostrated himself before Indra,

saying, 'Most gracious and generous Suraishwer!—as you have expressed yourself pleased with my conduct, your majesty will please place your hand on my head, and I will ask you for a token of your royal favour.' Indra accordingly placed his hand on Charoo's head, when the latter spoke as follows:—'My lord! you will be graciously pleased to dispense in future with the attendance of my wife Chitrangee at your royal *subha*, when the *bherry* may happen to be sounded at her mansion; and should your majesty desire her to sing and dance before you, you will graciously be pleased to overlook any slight imperfection or omission.' 'I willingly grant you this favour,' said Indra; 'but this is only a poor return for all you have done and suffered for her: ask for something more worthy of you.' 'My bountiful lord! there is nothing that I can at this moment wish for. I have more than I can well enjoy, your generosity to my wife having placed at my disposal the means of living in continued bliss.' Indra then bestowed his blessing on Charoo, and the *subha* adjourned. Shortly after, Charoo and Chitrangee entreated permission to leave, which being granted, they returned to Chitrakoot in great joy, where they lived in uninterrupted happiness.

"One day, being seated together, conversing on different topics, Chitrangee addressed Charoo thus:—'My dear love, I entreat you to let me know what relatives you have, what your profession was, where your birth-place is, and whether you are royally descended.' Charoo informed her of his birth, parentage, and profession, and the reason why he had left his brothers. When he approached the concluding part of his narrative, and thought of his wife and her trinkets, he felt a qualm of conscience, and was for a time silent. He was much affected by the reminiscences that had been called up by his speaking of the past. He had not once thought of his former wife since the eventful day on which he parted from her, so wholly engrossed had his mind been with the lovely Chitrangee and the incidents attendant upon his marriage with her. 'My dear Charoo!

—my beloved husband!' said Chitrangee, 'I pray you not to dissemble or hide the least circumstance from me. What is it that grieves you so much?—tell me, I beseech you! I cannot divine your thoughts, but should you have a wife, I shall be glad to receive her here, and let her reside with us and partake of our glorious state! Be assured of this—I will treat her as if she were my own sister!' She pressed him very much to let her know the cause of his apparent concern, and at length he revealed to her all the particulars regarding his wife, who, he said, received no support from his family, but relied entirely on him, and whom he had so cruelly neglected. This, he said, was the cause of his feeling so great a concern. 'When I was cast off by my brothers, who would not pay my debt,' continued Charoo, 'my wife preserved my character by giving me her jewels, which enabled me to discharge it. On parting from her I pledged my word never to forget her. Alas! how have I requited her self-denying love for me! Not one single thought have I bestowed on her since I left home, so completely have I been occupied in devising means for your restoration from the several perilous positions into which you have successively, and at very short intervals, fallen.' Chitrangee was affected at the relation, and replied, 'I hope, my dear husband, that you will not hesitate, after what I have said, to bring your wife here without further delay. Let me assure you once more that I will treat her as my own sister. I will even consent to live here subject to her!' Charoo was much touched with the very affectionate and disinterested manner in which Chitrangee spoke on the subject, and he promised that he would go and fetch his wife on the morrow.

"Next morning, Chitrangee again entreated Charoo to set off for his wife, and presented him with a pair of curious *padooka** which she possessed. Charoo put them on his feet, took the three jewels which had been presented to him

* Clogs.

by the chief of the fishes, and, after tenderly embracing Chitrangee, departed. Some time elapsed ere he could recollect the exact spot where his former wife resided; but at length, having uttered some mysterious words, he was instantly transported thither. When he entered the town, the people of his acquaintance instantly recognised him, and before he reached his dwelling some of them had conveyed the intelligence to his brothers, who hastened thither to receive him. As soon as he appeared they advanced, and met him with kind embraces, enquiring the cause of his long absence. Charoo immediately detailed the whole of his adventures, and the magnificence in which he lived at Chitrakoot, concluding by saying that if they wished it he would convey them all to that place. But Charoo's tale only elicited a smile of incredulity; for they thought he was affected in his mind, and therefore did not believe a word of what he said. 'You have not yet, we see,' said they, 'got rid of your old habits and exaggerating propensities. We feel no inclination, we can assure you, to taste of the enjoyments you speak of. We are quite content to remain here in the same station as our forefathers, where we can enjoy the society of sages and men of learning.' On this, Charoo again addressed them, saying, 'You despise me, or affect to do so, because in your arrogant envy you will not concede to me what is denied to you. I am nevertheless desirous of being just to you. What I say is the truth, and though you may now seem indifferent to my proposal, a time will come when you will wish that you had not slighted my advice,—when age and infirmities overtake you, and when your existence in this world draws to a close. I lost my fortune in gaming, it is true, and you abused and reviled me, and even turned me out of doors, instead of trying to remedy the evil; but I will deal more handsomely by you, and will let my acts prove to you that I can never harbour a covetous or niggardly spirit, —still less a revengeful feeling for the injury I received at your hands.' Saying this, he went into a private chamber,

and, after revering the jewel, produced immense treasure in gold, jewels, and precious stones of various descriptions. These he brought out and presented to his brothers, saying, 'I pray you, take these riches, and do not any longer give way to avarice.' He then left them in their amazement, and entered his wife's apartment. When she saw who it was that was approaching, she hastened up to him, falling at his feet, and afterwards embraced him with tears of joy. It would be impossible to pourtray the excess of their pleasure at this meeting; suffice it to say that a long period was spent in the mutual expression of all that two fond hearts could give utterance to; after which Charoo recounted the whole of his adventures to his wife, and acquainted her with the felicity he had been enjoying at Chitrakoot. He asked her if she would accompany him, or whether she felt disposed to ridicule him by disbelieving his tale, as his brothers had done. She replied, 'I pray you, do with me as may seem best to you. By your arrival this day I have been especially favored by the kind Providence who watches over us all. It has been my constant practice, since you left me, to supplicate heaven to bestow its kind aid in restoring you to me, and my prayer has at last been heard! Though I have grieved much for your absence, still I am amply repaid for all I have endured on your account, by once more seeing you in health and prosperity.' Many such expressions of affection did she lavish on Charoo; and at length, the sun having sunk beneath the horizon, they partook of their evening meal together, after which they retired for the night.

"Next morning Charoo paid a visit to his brothers, and having told them they might rely upon what he had said the previous day, he again invited them to share with him the enjoyments of a celestial existence at Chitrakoot. They told him in reply that they felt no inclination or desire for such grandeur, and that they would rather remain where they were than run the risk of losing what they already possessed. After this interview with his brothers, Charoo

returned to his wife, and taking her on his shoulder, with the jewel in his hand and the *padooka* on his feet, he bade adieu to all. They mounted into the air with such incredible swiftness that Charoo's brothers and the other persons who were there assembled were completely amazed, and in a short time they lost sight of them altogether. Perceiving the apparent miracle by which Charoo had made his ascent, his brothers deeply regretted having refused to accompany him, especially when to his wonderful ascent was added the proof of his wealth, of which he had left abundance behind him. 'We have lost our brother for ever from this day!' they exclaimed; 'we are not yet rid of the sin of avarice, which is our besetting evil; how then can we be deemed worthy of the immortal happiness which our brother is now in the enjoyment of? We thought in our blindness that all he said was false,—we have now the truth of it proved to us, by the miraculous ascent he has made, and by the riches he has left behind. How unfortunate are we to have lost eternal bliss through our own short-sighted obstinacy!' They both regretted deeply having refused the generous offer of their brother; and their neighbours having heard of the occurrence, greatly censured them for their folly and presumptuous ignorance.

"In a short time Charoo reached the Chitrakoot mountain, and presented himself before his beloved Chitrangee. She received him with her usual expressions of tender affection, and was equally lavish of her tokens of love to her sister, as she insisted on terming Charoo's first wife; in fact they became in a few hours the best of friends. Chitrangee took her into a dressing-room, and having placed her before a glass for the first time in her life, adorned her head, neck, arms, and breast with the finest pearls and diamonds she possessed; she then arrayed her in a suit of the richest material, embroidered with gold. The ornaments and fine clothes caused her to look so well, and set off her shape and figure to such advantage, that when Charoo saw her he was highly delighted, and felt grateful

to Chitrangee for her attention. All three now seated themselves together, and Chitrangee asked Charoo to relate the circumstances attending his visit to his family and friends. He told her how he had invited his brothers to accompany him, and of their obstinate refusal to comply with his wishes; how they still bore towards him, under the guise of friendship, the most inveterate hatred; and every other particular worth relating.

"The two sisters lived together in mutual harmony, friendship, and affection: their days rolled on in peaceful calmness, like the waters of a flowing stream. They were contented and happy, and shared equally the affection of their husband Charoo."

The Rajhouse, having brought his tale to a conclusion, said to the brahmin, "I have had the honor of recounting to you and to her highness the loves of the celestial Chitrangee and the amiable Charoo. I will now take my leave." Saying this, he disappeared amidst the other birds represented on the wall of the princess' apartment.

The disguised brahmin now entreated the Princess Pudmavuntty to fulfil her promise of marrying Prince Duntsain, having on his own part accomplished the task she had imposed upon him. The princess joyfully informed the brahmin that she could have no objection at all now to ally herself with the prince, and she desired that he might be brought in directly. Prince Duntsain was accordingly introduced, and the celebration of the nuptials was delayed no longer than was necessary to render it grand and complete.

The brahmin soon after this took leave of Prince Duntsain and the Princess Pudmavuntty, who acknowledged in suitable terms the deep obligations they were under to him, and for which they professed their inability to express their gratitude. They extolled his wisdom and power, in proof of which they adduced the miracle that had taken place in the room of the princess, where inanimate birds had successively appeared alive, and had recounted different tales, a

wonder which in itself was sufficient to secure for him everlasting renown.

Prince Duntsain accompanied the brahmin to the mouth of the ravine in which the Princess Pudmavuntty's palace was situated, and at parting prostrated himself at his feet, renewing his thanks, and prayers for the success of the friend who had done so much for him, and had snatched him, as it were, from the very jaws of death. The brahmin in return bestowed his blessing on the prince, and wished him a long, happy, and prosperous life, and the love and fidelity of his subjects when he ascended the throne. Here they parted, the brahmin to resume his journey with his friend Somedut, who was at present in the form of a parrot, and perched on his shoulder, and the prince to return to the splendid mansion of the beauteous Pudmavuntty.

CHAPTER XVI.

Vickramadetea re-assumes the form of a parrot, and the brahmin that of a human being—The brahmin sells the parrot to the king of Wishnoopoory, and returns to Oojein—The parrot decides an important cause between a Zotinge or goblin and a brahmin's son.

KING VICKRAMADETEA and the brahmin Somedut now re-assumed their former conditions, the latter taking his own form and the king that of a parrot. Somedut was soon informed of all that had occurred to the king in the palace of the Princess Pudmavuntty, and of the successful termination of Prince Duntsain's love affair. Somedut listened to the particulars with the greatest wonder and admiration, especially as regarded the tales which Veytal had related in the character of four different birds, which he had assumed for the occasion,—namely, that of the parrot, the Shaloonky, the peacock, and the Rajhouse,—and the wonderful and incredible prodigies of which they treated. Vickramadetea then requested the brahmin to do one thing more for him. He said there was not far off a city called Wishnoopoory, governed by a king named Gopichund. "He is, I have heard," continued he, "endowed with many excellent virtúes; I wish you, therefore, to take me there, and to sell me to him. Be satisfied with whatever price he may offer you, and you will then be at liberty to spend the remainder of your days in ease until I return to my kingdom. Acquaint also my minister with the whole of my adventures, so far as you know them, but be careful to keep the matter a profound secret from every one else, until I can recover my own body, which the traitor Koobjuck at present possesses." The brahmin was extremely sorry to hear Vickramedetea's wish to be sold, and said it went very much against his inclination and his love for his sovereign to do so. He begged Vickramadetea with great earnestness

not to impose upon him so painful a task, and added, "I have travelled far and long to find you, and having so far attained my wish do not deprive me of your presence, and thus place me in uncertainty as to your fate, and the vicissitudes attendant thereon. You cannot imagine the grief I shall experience on your account, or you would not be so cruel. Remain with me, and I may perhaps be of service to you, in enabling you to repossess yourself of your own body. I have not the least doubt that my family will be provided for during my absence." The king replied, "You have, my dear Somedut, by what you have already done, fully established in my mind a firm belief of your integrity and honesty of purpose, and of the great love you bear for me; nothing more is wanted. It is, however, indispensably necessary that you should do what I now desire, otherwise I shall never regain my own body and my kingdom. King Gopichund is a very eminent and learned monarch; if you will sell me to him I shall cause him to offer up a certain sacrifice, by which I hope to attain my end. Moreover, I wish you and my minister to appear at Gopichund's court this day three months, in the guise of mendicants, and at the last oblation of the sacrifice you must demand me of him. He cannot decline giving me up to you or to any other person, as the sacrifice would in that case become useless. I trust, therefore, you will see the necessity of doing as I desire you; and be sure that you and my minister do not fail to be present at the time I have now appointed." The brahmin, finding he had no alternative, at length consented, but with the greatest reluctance, and proceeded accordingly towards the city where king Gopichund lived. He carried the parrot on his hand, and in this way went from street to street throughout the town, and it so happened that he met Gopichund himself, with his retinue, returning from an airing. Gopichund, seeing the bird perched on Somedut's hand, was struck with the beauty of its plumage, and asked him if it was for sale, and what he would take for it. The brahmin replied that the parrot was

valued at no less a sum than one hundred and twenty-five thousand rupees. The king said it was too much by far to ask for so small a bird, and that he could not comprehend the meaning of pricing it so enormously high, unless indeed it was possessed of some great and rare qualities. The parrot hereupon said to the king, "Do not doubt my wisdom;—buy me of the brahmin, and pay him what he asks. Then demand of me anything you would wish to know, and I will answer you." The parrot's language pleased Gopichund so much that he instantly ordered the money to be paid down, and took immediate possession of the intelligent bird.

The brahmin, as soon as he had received his money, took leave of the parrot in the most affectionate manner, and departed for Oojein, to communicate his news to the minister. Having reached the city he went straight to his residence, and entered at once into a recital of Vickramadetea's adventures, concluding by informing him of his present form and location. The minister was exceedingly glad to hear that the search after his master had proved successful, and sincerely grieved to think of all he had suffered and was likely to suffer. He thanked Somedut for his exertions, and requested him not to divulge the circumstance of the king's being found to any one, nor to allow a single person to suspect that he possessed so much money, lest some misfortune should befal him. He begged him above all things to be punctual in joining him at a time and place which they appointed. Somedut then took his leave, and went to his own home, where his family received him with great joy.

King Gopichund kept the parrot in a magnificent cage, richly studded with diamonds and other precious stones, and took great pleasure in listening to the amusing tales which from time to time it recounted for the monarch's amusement.

Gopichund's subjects were happy, contented, and religiously inclined; they were peaceful among themselves, and

were in the constant practice of resorting to their temples and offering up their prayers to God; they were never known to lie, at least the great body of them, even for their own gain or aggrandisement.

There was in this city a brahmin named Crustna Josey, who had an only son named Moodgul, a well-behaved and well-educated youth. One day this young man requested his father's permission to go on a pilgrimage to Kashee,* as he was very anxious to pay his vows at that holy place, and the caravan was also just about to set out. His father, however, objected to his going, as his grandson's *moonje*† was shortly to take place, and he wished him to be present on the occasion; so he told him not to think of going with the caravan then preparing to start, but to postpone it to some future time. The son, having previously made up his mind to proceed with the caravan, could ill brook this, as he thought, unnecessary opposition, so he went and joined the company who were to proceed to Kashee by that opportunity. There was a certain Borre‡ tree behind this brahmin's house, in which dwelt a Zotinge,‖ who had the power of taking upon himself the shape or form of any other individual, just as it suited his interest or whim. Knowing, therefore, that Moodgul had joined the caravan against his father's expressed wish, the Zotinge determined to personate him during his absence. He accordingly assumed the form of Moodgul, and repaired to the brahmin's house, who was overjoyed at seeing his son, and asked him why he had returned. The Zotinge replied that he had found no good omen for starting; that he had absented himself simply to see how his father would bear it, and having heard that he was angry, he had returned. The Zotinge lived with the

* A celebrated city and place of pilgrimage in Benares.

† The ceremony of investing the young brahmin with the sacrificial thread.

‡ The Jujuba tree, or *Zyzyphus Jujuba*.

‖ The spirit of a deceased person, wandering as a goblin.

brahmin and his family for a long time, without being in the least suspected, as he conducted himself exactly as Moodgul used to do, at the same time sharing Moodgul's wife's bed.

The time appointed for the ceremony of investing the young brahmin with the sacred thread was now fast approaching, so the necessary preparations were made, a beautiful temporary arbour was erected, and the false Moodgul accompanied Crustna Josey into the country to invite their friends and relatives to attend the ceremony. The real Moodgul, having within three months' time performed his pilgrimage, returned with the caravan to the city, and repaired at once to his father's house. He was delighted to see the preparations going on, and that he was still in time to take part in the ceremony and join in the festivities. He proceeded directly to his mother's apartment, and, prostrating himself before her, begged her forgiveness and blessing. Seeing that her son had not been long away from her, in which case alone such a practice was followed, she could not understand it: he had only gone a short distance with his father, as she thought, to invite their friends; she therefore asked him to explain what he meant by asking her forgiveness and blessing in this unusual manner. He told her where he had been, but this only perplexed her the more. She said that she had but one son, and he had been with them all along, and had only gone that morning with his father into the country. Moodgul did not know what to make of this, but thought that perhaps his wife would know him better. She happened to come in at this very time, and he said to her, "Well, my dear wife, you at least will know me: am I not your husband?" She had, as she thought, only that morning parted from her husband, and it was not surprising, therefore, that she should have replied angrily, taking him for an impostor, "What villain art thou?—whence dost thou come? Art thou not ashamed of thy baseness in trying thus to impose on me by calling me thy wife,—I who never

before saw thee? Thou art doubtless some vile deceiver from Benares. Leave this house instantly, or thou wilt meet with the treatment thou seemest so richly to deserve!" At this time Moodgul's young son, who was about to be invested with the sacred thread, entered the room. "My son," said the unhappy father, "do you too shun me? Am I not your father?" The child, as much or even more deceived, from his extreme youth, than his elders, replied, "What a base chattering knave thou art! Dost thou dare to address thyself thus to those who know thee not? Who art thou? Get thee hence instantly, or I will cause thee to be punished severely for thy impudence!" Poor Moodgul tried all he could to convince them of his identity, by mentioning the names of each and all of their relatives, friends, and acquaintances, and by recalling many little family incidents, but all to no purpose. His mother, wife, and son, were certainly surprised at the accuracy of his statements, but this was not sufficient to dispel the error into which they had fallen, and which had taken so deep a hold of their minds.

By this time Moodgul's father had returned, and with him the counterfeit son. The real Moodgul, on seeing his father, went forward, and with a low reverence besought his blessing. The father was very much astonished at his salutation, and said, "Thou addressest me by the title of father!—I think thou art labouring under some grievous mistake. Thou art not my son! I have but one son, and here he is," pointing to the Zotinge. "I cannot but think that thy mind is unsettled; if not, thou art endeavouring to palm off some joke upon my family, but I would advise thee to desist from such practices and to go thy way." Moodgul, at the close of his father's speech, felt a sharp pang shoot through his heart, and he bitterly repented having left his paternal dwelling in opposition to his father's express desire. It was, however, useless now to regret the past, but he could not by any means think of an expedient to extricate himself from his present dilemma. At last he resolved upon going to King Gopichund, and representing

his case to him, who, he doubted not, would enable him to regain his position in his father's household. Before he left the house, the Zotinge went to Moodgul's mother, and said, "It is always the object of the impostors from Benares, good mother, to obtain something from those on whom they practise their deceptions; give this fellow, therefore, some undressed rice." The mother was in high spirits and good humour in consequence of the approaching festivity, so she went immediately, at the desire of her son, and brought a small quantity of rice to the supposed cheat, who, however, resented the insult by spurning it away; he then quitted the house and bent his steps towards the king's palace. When he arrived there, he represented to his majesty the actual state of affairs, with all necessary particulars, and demanded that justice should be done him. The king was greatly surprised at the representations made to him, and having sent for Crustna Josey, asked him what he meant by denying all knowledge of his son, after his return from the pilgrimage, even although the expedition had been undertaken contrary to his express commands, which did not in the least alter the case. "My lord," said Crustna Josey, "your majesty no doubt knows that I have but one son, and that son is now at home. The person now before your majesty I do not recollect having ever before seen, and I am at a loss to know on what ground he claims relationship with me. I beg your majesty will be pleased to send for my son, if you disbelieve my assertions." The king immediately ordered the son to be brought before him, and when he arrived the king observed such an exact resemblance between the two, in their make, features, complexion, size, and everything else, that he and the whole court were greatly embarrassed, and could not arrive at a satisfactory or conclusive opinion on the matter.

In this strait the king bethought him of his clever parrot, who, he said, might possibly be able to solve the mystery. The parrot was accordingly brought into court and the case having been laid before him, he replied, after some time

spent in contemplation, "My lord, it is not for me to decide a case of so much importance. I pray you, take it into your own hands, or place it in those of your learned councillors, who are so eminently conversant with the manner of judging such matters." But the king said he was determined that the parrot should decide the case. The parrot then asked Crustna Josey which was his son, and he pointed to the Zotinge. The same question was put to the rest of Crustna's family, and they each and all indicated the same individual. The parrot next questioned the Zotinge on different points, but he met them all in a satisfactory manner, so that, except to the parrot, the case seemed to be as far from being settled as ever. The parrot, however, was at no loss to discover the cheat. He ordered a *zauree** to be brought, which being done, he said, "If you both desire justice to be impartially administered, you will consent to the test I now prescribe. The real son alone will be able to enter into the *zauree*, and make his exit by the spout. The one who fails to do so is undoubtedly the cheat." The parrot addressed himself first to the real Moodgul, who said, "Is it possible for any human being to enter into so small a vessel?—it cannot be done by mortal means." The false Moodgul on this came forward, and said to the king, "O king, I am able to enter the *zauree* and to come out through the spout." "Are you?" said the parrot; "then hasten and do it." The Zotinge at once performed the feat, to the great astonishment of all. The parrot then called Crustna Josey, and asked him if he could now identify his son. The brahmin, greatly perplexed, said he could not be certain. The parrot enquired of him if he had not a Borre tree on his premises, that was occupied by a demon spirit. The brahmin replied that there was such a tree, on which a Zotinge had dwelt, but that he had not seen anything of him for the last three months. The parrot then said to the king, "May it please

* A particular drinking-vessel, with a spout and a long neck.

your majesty, did you ever see or hear of any mortal man being able to do what this vile impostor has this day done—enter a small pot and come out through its neck? Does your majesty not see who is the real son of the brahmin? I beg your majesty will immediately order the tree on the brahmin's premises to be cut down." This was done, and the Zotinge disappeared for ever.

The king was much pleased with the parrot's judgment, and praised him loudly for his wisdom and ingenuity. The venerable brahmin and his wife received their son with tears of joy, and the wife and son of Moodgul hung down their heads with shame for having so grossly abused him. His father then approached, and tenderly embraced him, saying, "My dear son, we are fully aware of the indignity and cruel treatment which we in our ignorance have inflicted on you, but I trust you will forgive us, and return home to your paternal roof." Moodgul replied, in much anger, "I will not go home with you. I renounce the whole of you! —henceforth you shall be to me as my bitterest enemies!" The brahmin entreated him with much earnestness and contrition, but Moodgul was deplorably obstinate, and would not hearken to the voice of his aged sire. The parrot, finding the youth bent upon not being reconciled to his friends and connections, interceded on their behalf, saying that they had been altogether ignorant of the imposition that was practised upon them by the Zotinge, and desiring him to bear them no ill-will for what they had been unintentionally guilty of, and therefore, in fact, not guilty of at all. "Nothing," continued the parrot, "is more noble, more generous, or more pleasurable than to forgive even real injuries done to us: how much more necessary, then, does it become for every man of virtue and magnanimity to forgive injuries which, though productive of the same effect to the person on whom they have been inflicted, are still divested of much of their evil qualities from the circumstance of their being unintentional? It is your duty, therefore, to forget and forgive every offence or injury you

may have received from your erring and mistaken relatives." Being thus persuaded by the parrot, Moodgul consented to return to his father's house with his family.

It afforded the brahmin, Crustna Josey, no small amount of pleasure to fold once more in his arms, in his own house, his only son, whom he dearly loved. He even went the length of soliciting his son's pardon for what he had done against him, and so did the rest of them. "O my son!" said the father, "I cannot imagine what charm the Zotinge could have put upon me and my family! I repent most sincerely of my conduct towards you, and I trust you will, when you consider the circumstances under which we were placed, extend to us your forgiveness." He continued in this strain for a considerable time, and adduced instances where such impositions had been successfully practised, until at length his son's heart was softened. "O most revered father!" said Moodgul, "I am now fully sensible of the nature of the occurrence, and I feel how wrong I have been in my expressions of anger against you and the rest of those near and dear to me. I can see now how matters stood, and am not at all surprised that you should have acted in the manner you did. I have no reason to complain of you. Pardon me, I entreat you!" They were thus once more united in the bonds of affection, and the brahmin, embracing his son, shed tears of joy. The ceremony of investing Moodgul's son with the sacred thread was celebrated with great pomp and joy, and they continued to live in peace and good fellowship during the remainder of their lives.

CHAPTER XVII.

The brahmin Somedut and Vickramadetea's Prime Minister arrive at Wishnoopoory as mendicants, and obtain the parrot from the king as a gift—They return to Oujein, and deliver Vickramadetea to the queen his wife—The usurper Koobjuck, wishing to initiate the queen into the mysteries of transmigration, enters into the dead body of a hare, on which Vickramadetea instantly resumes his own body, causes the hare to be destroyed, and re-ascends the throne.

THE wise parrot and the good king Gopichund were one day engaged in conversing together, and they talked of the several sciences, the great benefits accruing from good government, and the necessity for leading a life of morality and virtue. After touching upon these several topics, the parrot said, "My lord, I am extremely pleased to observe that your majesty is not indifferent to your future welfare, in the midst of the wealth and grandeur with which you are surrounded. It behoves us all to have some thought of futurity. Your majesty has entered upon a very interesting inquiry, which, while it pleases me, has also given rise to reminiscences which it were far better had never been recalled. Your majesty spoke of a future state: sure enough we must prepare for it. This world is but transitory, and must sooner or later come to an end. With many, it has already ended, and those who remain will soon run out their allotted period of existence. Thousands there are, in fact they constitute by far the majority, who are content with the present,—who never look beyond this world. Alas! what can wealth or power, rank or position, avail a man at the last extremity? Only consider, your majesty, the object for which you have been created. Consider again, in what will men who live solely for this world place their trust at their last end? Not in the bubble of worldly vanity—it will explode; not in worldly pleasures—

they will vanish; not in high connections—they will not serve them; not in wealth—for they cannot carry it with them; not in rank or royal dignity—for death levels every distinction. In short, it is not in the recollection of a life spent in the giddy mazes of dissipation and the silly fashions of a thoughtless and wicked world, that one should look for peace and serenity of mind at the moment when life is flickering in the mortal frame, but it is in the memory of a sober, righteous, and just life. Listen to my counsel, I pray you; it will afford your majesty food for contemplation. I most earnestly exhort and conjure you, by the ties of mutual friendship which unite us, to live virtuously; you will thus ensure not only a peaceful and prosperous reign in this life, but will lay up treasures for the next."

The parrot's impressive talk and arguments on matters of religion made so strong an impression on the king's mind that he felt irresistibly impelled to entreat him to point out the most approved method of devotional exercise, in order that he might, by following his advice, secure eternal happiness. "There is a certain *rajasu yudna*,"* replied the parrot, "which, if your majesty perform it in a particular manner, will tend to confirm you in your faith, and will exhibit to you in a forcible manner your dependence on the great and supreme Ruler of the universe, for He alone is your majesty's main prop and support,—He maintains you in power and riches, He bestows life, health, and liberty. The spring of your felicity and the fountain of all your enjoyments is in Him. Offer your sacrifice in all humility, so as to be acceptable to Him; and if He is once satisfied with you, He will, I doubt not, shower upon you his divine mercy, and enable you to acquire virtue and every accomplishment." His majesty on this sent for his astrologer and his chief priest, and communicated to them his intention, whereupon the former fixed upon an auspicious

* A sacrifice which is performed only by great monarchs, attended by their tributory princes.

moment for the commencement of the sacrifice, and the latter suggested the necessary preparations, at the same time undertaking the office of providing all things accordingly.

The king then summoned his minister, and despatched him with a suitable retinue to invite foreign princes to be present on the occasion of his great sacrifice. A horse, splendidly arrayed, was led in the minister's train, to signify, as is the usual practice, that the preparatory ceremonies of the sacrifice had commenced. A temporary arbour, of a magnificent description, was constructed for the occasion, richly ornamented within and without with all the grandeur which is ever at the command of wealth and power. The roads leading to this arbour were sprinkled with water to lay the dust, and orders were issued for adorning the whole city, in honor of the great sacrifice at the palace, and for observing a period of general rejoicing. The royal camp, although very spacious, was soon filled with the numerous troops belonging to the foreign princes, who were entertained with every imaginable courtesy and respect during the interval preceding the day of the sacrifice, at which they were invited to be present. The brahmins, sages, hermits, and devotees of all denominations, gathered together in one large assemblage, and performed their sacred duties with much reverence and profound meditation round the sacrificial pit, which had been dug according to the usual form, and in which a fire was kept constantly burning. Gopichund, having put on his royal robes, embroidered with gold and ornamented with precious stones and pearls, attended in person, with the sacrificial bracelet round his wrist, which almost vied in splendour and dazzling brightness with the resplendent rays of the sun, which was then shining in all its glory. The sacrifice was to be performed by the monarch himself, and he had been instructed in all the necessary duties by the chief priest, who attended him.

King Vickramadetea's minister, whose name was Bhutty, and Somedut the brahmin, disguised as mendicants, arrived at King Gopichund's capital at this time, as had been agreed

upon. Their carriage and demeanour were so much in keeping with their garbs, and they presented such an apt personification of devotion and a religious life, that the most renowned of the priests and devotees received them with every mark of respect and deference, placing them on two seats immediately fronting the sacrificial pit.

The time having at length arrived for the great sacrifice, Bhutty and Somedut burned incense, and offered up sweet perfumes, with other ingredients of a like nature, as prescribed by the Hindu rites. Gopichund having performed the last oblation, Bhutty and Somedut advanced towards him, and, after bestowing their joint blessings on him, addressed him in these words:—"O king!—we have travelled an immense distance to assist at this great sacrifice, and we are sanguine that after what we have seen performed you will not hesitate to grant the request we are about to prefer to you. It is this conviction of your acquiescence to our wishes which emboldens us to address you, and by your compliance you will most assuredly secure to yourself the merit of genuine piety, and a strict regard to the dictates of your faith and religion." The king said, "O revered mendicants!—I am ready and willing to meet your wishes so far as it lies in my power; be pleased therefore to let me know your desire." "Your majesty," said they, "possesses a parrot of rare acquirements; we wish to obtain possession of it, in preference to anything else that it is in your royal power to bestow. We demand the bird in charity, and will feel ourselves richly remunerated,—far more so than if you had deigned to bestow half your kingdom upon us." The king appeared greatly disconcerted at this request, for he valued the parrot almost as dearly as he did his own life. It had nearly the same effect on him as if a poisoned arrow had lodged in his heart, for he fainted and fell heavily to the ground. His minister, who was present, raised him up, and applied restoratives, which brought him back to consciousness. He advised the king not to allow himself to be thus afflicted, as it tended to

diminish his reputation for a strict adherence to his faith and morals, and the liberality for which he was deservedly famed. "Your majesty," continued the minister, "is well acquainted with the story of the Chakravutty who cut off his own flesh for the sake of the Supreme Being, and gave it to the royal hawk to be devoured. King Shreeyal sacrificed his own son to the god Shiva, for which he is still held in great veneration by the world at large. King Bully was also much famed for disinterestedness and generosity. These are instances, among many others which we find recorded by ancient authors in our sacred volumes, which ought to stimulate us to similar acts of self-denial. Compared to these, what you are now called upon to do seems but a trifle,—it is but the giving away of a bird—a rare bird though it be—to which you are fondly attached. It is the bird's rarity which would render the gift deserving of public note. Let me entreat that your majesty will be pleased to consider this point well."

Meanwhile, the hermits and others there assembled continued their offerings and religious austerities, to propitiate the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and, by a humble acknowledgment of their dependence on Him, to secure to themselves and to him on whose behalf they were called upon to join in the ceremony of the great sacrifice offered that day, the reward of all good things, both in this world and the next. The minister, pointing to these religious men, said, "You see that you are even yet engaged in supplicating the divine favor through your majesty's priests and the devout men of other cities. Can you then hesitate to do what perhaps has been commanded by God to try you?" The king, thus pressed, had no alternative but to comply, so he brought out the parrot and delivered him to Bhutty and Somedut, who then retired, with many expressions of gratitude and a due acknowledgment of the monarch's truly liberal and charitable disposition.

The king rewarded, with presents in lands and money, each and all of the brahmins and devout men assembled

there; and on the princes and nobles he bestowed ornaments, apparel, elephants, horses, and other costly articles; in a word, he treated them with profuse liberality, and feasted them with great magnificence. Before they parted, the religious men bestowed their blessings on the king, and the princes and nobles made professions of never-dying friendship and gratitude. Thus ended the great sacrificial day.

Bhutty and Somedut no sooner became possessed of the parrot than they commenced their homeward journey, and did not slacken their pace until they reached Oojein, some few days after. In the evening, after dark, Bhutty took the parrot in his hand and went into the apartment of the queen (Vickramadetea's wife) without the knowledge of the wicked Koobjuck the usurper, and informed her in a few words of his object in visiting her at such an unusual hour. On hearing the welcome intelligence of the near presence of her lord and master, she was transported with joy. She requested him to acquaint her with the particulars of his visit to the court of Gopichund, the renowned monarch. It was indeed affecting to witness the eager inquiry which marked every feature of the queen, and the intense interest with which she listened to the minister; and how much the more when she found that her lord, in the guise of the parrot, still retained the use of his speech!—for he entered into a relation of all that had happened to him since he first set out from his palace. Great was the affection she displayed towards the parrot,—her humble demeanour towards him was exactly that of a loving wife to her husband. At the end of the relation she addressed herself thus to the bird:—"My lord and husband!—will you be pleased to instruct me how I can help you to regain your own body? The space of six months which I have demanded at the hands of the wicked Koobjuck, before I admit him into my apartment, will expire to-morrow, and he has promised to show me then the miracle of transmigration. He has not, since the day on which he vainly strove by every means at his command to make me subservient to his pleasure, held

any conference with me. He has, I know, been counting the days as they passed, and awaiting with much anxiety the expiration of the time I fixed upon." "Very well," said the parrot, "do not be alarmed, but take courage; I will endeavour to extricate you from your perilous position. I have discovered myself only to you, and you must be very careful not to divulge the secret of my being here in my present form to any one, for the least intimation on the subject to Koobjuck will involve me in some other misfortune, and perhaps even cause my death." "Your majesty must know," replied the queen, "that the moment I suspected Koobjuck I prohibited him from entering my apartments. Besides, I have expressly told him that unless he practises before me the mysterious art of transmigration at the expiration of six months, I will never even look him in the face." The parrot then desired Bhutty to retire to his own home, telling him that on the morrow they would set about devising means to effect their purpose. He said he trusted, by the aid of Providence, to return speedily to his natural form and condition, and to enter once again upon the duties of his office. Bhutty made his obeisance, and departed accordingly.

The queen held the parrot in her hand with much respect and veneration; she tenderly embraced him, with tears flowing fast down her cheeks, and said, "I have been deceived indeed, but I have at last found him whom my soul holds most dear on earth. My past sufferings and heart-burnings are now more than recompensed: heaven has favored me on this occasion in a most liberal manner, for which I now offer up the outpourings of a soul full of grateful emotions and sentiments far too profound for utterance." She then placed the parrot in his cage, and the whole of that night was spent in conjecturing the events that the morrow would bring forth.

The next morning, by sunrise, the wicked Koobjuck sent for Bhutty the minister, in whom he had great confidence, and informed him that the period of six months assigned by

the queen would expire on that day, and that he was prepared to impart to her the knowledge which she was so anxious to become possessed of. He told him to go and enquire of the queen if she was prepared to receive him. The minister, in obedience to the order he had received, went to the queen and made her acquainted with Koobjuck's request. She replied that she was as anxious as ever to be initiated into the mystery, and that after the king should have satisfied her in that respect she would place herself entirely at his disposal. The minister returned and communicated this to Koobjuck, who heard it with much pleasure, and ordered his attendants to procure for him the dead body of some animal, no matter of what kind, or of any species of bird. They accordingly went out in search of one.

The wicked Koobjuck, in the mean while, went into the queen's apartment, accompanied by the minister, and after the usual interchange of civilities they sat down. Koobjuck was priding himself on the wit and discernment he displayed in a flow of flattering encomiums he was bestowing on the queen, when the attendants whom he had sent out returned with a dead hare. Having taken the hare and placed it beside him, he addressed the queen and said, "My chaste wife! the idol of my heart!—I beg you will be pleased to cast your eyes upon me, and I will show you in a few minutes the most wonderful miracle ever witnessed." The parrot was a silent listener to all that was being said, and an observer likewise of all that was going forward,—he was concealed under the folds of the queen's garment. Koobjuck, having secured the attention of the queen, commenced to work the charm, and in a short time he left the human body, which was that of Vickramadetea, and entered the body of the hare, which began to show signs of life, and at last skipped about with all the sprightliness of life and health. The parrot, observing this, instantly cast off his body and entered that of Vickramadetea, and thus regained his own form, which had been so long forcibly kept from him by the wicked and ungrateful Koobjuck.

No sooner did Vickramadetea assume his natural body, than he ordered the attendants to catch the hare. This command, so terrible to the hare, resounded throughout the palace, and was echoed from mouth to mouth,—in fact they had all been in some degree prepared for it. The hare instantly skipped off, and hid himself in the kitchen, but his pursuers followed him there, with shouts and cries, and so belaboured him with the sticks with which they had provided themselves as speedily to put an end to his existence. They then brought the body to Vickramadetea, who ordered it to be thrown to the dogs and birds of prey. This was nothing more than the inhuman Koobjuck richly deserved. Such are the inscrutable but invariable decrees of Providence! Though the wicked and the profane may for a time seem to triumph in their evil courses, the punishment from on high sooner or later overtakes them in the midst of their career. There is a great moral to be learned from this, and to those of a contemplative turn of mind it will afford sufficient food for consideration during their leisure hours.

King Vickramadetea was much pleased at the successful manner in which he had executed his plans, and thanked God for his mercy towards him. He embraced the queen in the first transport of his joy, and he was also profuse in his thanks to the minister for all he had done. He also sent for Somedut the brahmin, and extolled him in very high and flattering terms for the trouble he had been at in wandering through wilds and forest glens in search of him, regardless of his own comfort. The next day Vickramadetea appeared in public, and ascended his throne amid the acclamations and joyful greetings of his courtiers and the whole assembled populace.

The inhabitants of Oojein had been getting gradually reconciled to the hardness of the lot they experienced under the iron sway of Koobjuck; consequently any change for the better in their condition was as far removed from their minds as any event could well be. Since the time Koob-

juck usurped the throne, it was "as a roaring lion and a raging bear" that this wicked ruler lorded it over the poor people. Nothing but complaints of injustice and the most iniquitous proceedings were to be heard on all sides; and the distress of the people was heavy, increased as it was in a great measure by the recollection of what they had been accustomed to under the mild and just rule of the generous Vickramadetea. But there was now to be an end of all this: the tyrant had gone to his account, and the rightful owner of the throne was once more amongst them!

One of the first acts of Vickramadetea, after he had assumed the reins of government, was to reinstate all those who had been injustly ousted from their places, and to restore the properties of all who had been deprived of them. Vickramadetea was aware how his subjects had suffered during his absence, and he hastened to do them the most ample justice. He rewarded his tried friends and trusty vassals in the most profuse manner, and his friend Somedut came in for a handsome pension—handsomer far than his most sanguine expectation could have pictured—after which he retired, with the most profound feeling of gratitude, love, and regard for the generous donor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The inhabitants of Oojein once more enjoy the blessings of good government under King Vickramadetea—The king's mind continuing disturbed by reflections on the prediction that he should be killed by the son of a virgin aged seven years, he sends emissaries into various countries to make enquiries if any such were known—Soometra, the youthful daughter of a brahmin, becomes pregnant by the king of the serpents, and bears a son whom they name Shalivahan—He early displays great martial talents, as well as extraordinary wisdom as a councillor—In repelling an attack by Vickramadetea, Shalivahan, provided with an army by his father, puts the enemy to rout and slays the king—From this date the Shalivahan era begins to be computed.

THE city of Oojein was now entirely relieved from the yoke of oppression under which it but a short time before had groaned, and the inhabitants were gradually regaining their wonted cheerfulness and serenity. Some who had fled from the place under the tyrant's repeated oppressions and injustice on their persons and property, retraced their steps, and were again located within their peaceful dwellings, with their properties restored to them. Under Vickramadetea's blissful reign there was not the slightest inclination in the people toward a profligate life or the indulgence of any other wicked or improper desires. Their love for their monarch, who was proverbially just and virtuous, regulated their actions: they imitated his example, and were consequently devout and sincere in their religious duties, taking great delight in tending and succouring their poor and distressed fellow-citizens.

Such was the condition of the country shortly after Vickramadetea resumed the throne. During his reign there was but one drawback to his complete earthly happiness: it had been predicted, as has been before mentioned, that he would die by the hand of the son of a virgin. To prevent such a catastrophe, he sent his emissaries into many

different countries, as well as to the remotest corners of his own dominions, to gain precise information, if possible, as to the birth of such a person.

On the south of the river Godavery was situated the city of Prathestan, where reigned a king named Somekaunt, who to a handsome exterior added every virtue which can adorn the human mind. He devoted as much of his time as he could spare from the duties of his state to acts of charity towards his poorer subjects. He was liberal and kind, and studied all the varied wants of his people with the object of relieving them; by which means he not only helped to improve the condition of his people, and with it to increase the prosperity of his country, but he also planted in the hearts of his subjects a lasting sentiment of love and gratitude towards himself, which was manifested by their constant invocations and prayers that blessings might be showered upon his head.

There was a poor brahmin, named Soolochun, in this city, who had an only daughter, a most lovely child, called Soometra. She had been deprived of her mother, by the cruel hand of death, at the age of four years. The brahmin felt this stroke of affliction to his heart's inmost core; and having no other near relative who could undertake the management of his unhappy child, and give her the nourishment needed at her years, he was thrown into a most uncontrollable fit of grief, from which he rose at times only to fall into a more distressing one, by recalling to his mind with renewed force the forlorn condition of his infant daughter. He carried her in his arms whilst following the usual avocations of his calling, and it was most pitiable to behold the care-worn and haggard looks of the father, and to hear the piercing cries of the infant for its usual sustenance. Thus the father went on from day to day, feeding his child as best he could, until it began to speak. When she could express herself in an intelligible manner, he was agreeably surprised to hear with what good sense her observations were characterised.

The river Godda not being far from his house, the brahmin made it a daily practice to perform his ablutions in its stream, and to worship the titular image of Shashe,* one of which he kept in his house. One day Soolochun went as usual, accompanied by his daughter, to bathe. The father left the child on the bank, and had no sooner descended into the river than a most wonderful occurrence took place. Soometra had scarcely seated herself, when a young and handsome brahmin appeared before her. He gazed on her silently at first, and then drew near and addressed her in a respectful tone. "O charming and celestial beauty!" said he, "permit me to fold your slender and lovely form in my arms!" These were strange and unintelligible words to her, and she seemed at a loss what to reply, so she looked anxiously in the direction of her father, and shrieked for help, as she thought the young brahmin before her would ill-treat her. Her cries did not reach her father, who had gone far into the water, so the youth, perceiving her loneliness, approached nearer to her, and placed his hand on her head, when she immediately felt creeping over her the sensations of ripening love and affection. He then desired her not to be afraid of him, although he did not belong to this world, but to the lower one. "Listen to me," continued he; "as you are ignorant of the reason why I assumed this form, I will tell you. You will bear a son who will become a mighty and renowned monarch: by his prowess and gallantry he will subdue a mighty nation; his fame and merit will be spread far and wide, and will endure as long as the sun and moon exist. If at any time you should happen to fall into difficulties, recal this my shape and appearance in your mind, and mention aloud my name, when I will instantly appear to you, and relieve you from any dangers with which you may

* The king of the serpents, a large snake with a thousand heads, who is at once the couch and canopy of Vishnoo, as well as the upholder of the world, on which rests one of his heads.

be encompassed. But come, hasten to grant my request. Do you fully comprehend the nature of my speech?" Soometra, touched with his appearance and friendly disposition, smiled at the conclusion of his address, and did not hesitate to allow him a chaste embrace, after which the youth disappeared. The father, after bathing and performing his ablutions, returned to where he had left his daughter, and was surprised at not finding her there, but perceived her at a distance coming towards him. She appeared to him, though retaining the same line of features, to have suddenly advanced to womanhood; but on coming nearer, he found that she was in her former condition of infancy. The father asked her why she had left her place, and to his horror and indignation she told him all that had occurred, without concealing a single circumstance. He became very much dejected when he thought of the disgrace that would probably fall on him; though he doubted whether any injury had been inflicted upon his child, as she was still an infant. Then again he recalled the circumstance which he beheld as his daughter advanced to him from the distance: she then appeared to have all at once grown into a woman, and on nearing him had as suddenly resumed her natural shape of a child. He was greatly puzzled at all this. "God alone knows," said he, "what this illusion means: my eyes could not have deceived me, and yet how can I account for the strange phenomenon?" As he was unable to solve the mystery he led his daughter home. Four months after the occurrence above narrated, the brahmin's daughter, suddenly and against all precedent in the order of nature, shot up into a young woman, and at the same time showed every sign of being with child. When the neighbours came to know of her situation, it created a deal of scandal, which was productive of great pain to her father, for much stress was laid on her supposed infamy and gross violation of virtue.

The unpleasant intelligence soon reached the ears of king Somekaunt,—that a brahmin's daughter had become

pregnant without the knowledge of a husband. This so exasperated the king that he summoned her father to his court, and in a threatening manner bade him declare the truth regarding his daughter's vile conduct, as he must be fully aware of the strictness of the laws enacted against such offenders. The brahmin was thrown into much agitation, and finding it would be of no avail to conceal the truth, represented to the king what he had learned from his daughter, and that he himself had witnessed the transformation in her shape on returning from the river. He begged his majesty to extend his royal clemency to him, as he was innocent, and knew nothing more of the affair than what he had already mentioned. King Somekaunt and his officers would not believe a word of what the brahmin said, but told him that they suspected him of being privy to the whole affair, and sentenced him to be banished from the city without loss of time. The poor brahmin, his heart torn with grief and anguish on account of the disgrace brought on him by his daughter's misconduct, which was now aggravated by insult and unmerited punishment, returned to his dwelling, and having packed up his goods and household materials, departed with his daughter from the city. He took up his residence outside the fort walls, with some potters, and spent his time in his usual occupation.

At the completion of nine months, Soometra was safely delivered of a handsome male child, to the great joy of herself and likewise of her father. On the twelfth day they gave him the name of Shalivahan. As the child grew up, he had no one of his own class to associate with, so was compelled to choose his companions from among the potters in the neighbourhood. His sole amusement during his leisure hours was to form images and puppets of the clay procured from his companions, and to place them in a row like an army, with a sword in the hand of each and shields on their backs. The officers were represented on the backs of horses, and they carried an additional weapon of defence in the shape of a long spear. Besides the foot soldiers and

their mounted officers, he formed a regiment of cavalry, who carried more weapons than the former, among which were bows and quivers full of arrows. The introduction of elephants added to the wonder of this extraordinary specimen of infantile ingenuity. This was the work of several weeks, each day witnessing the formation of a certain number of brigades, and as each brigade was completed a sufficient number of officers was apportioned to it. Thus did this future hero, even in his tender years, accustom himself to all the paraphernalia of war, and the missiles of destruction then in use. Having completed the army, Shalivahan repaired with his companions to the top of a high mound of earth, and issued orders in a loud voice, as if for a grand and imposing parade. The army, however, as may well be imagined, remained stationary; nevertheless, numbers of people flocked round to witness the amusing proceedings of the youngsters. Some were led to the spot from mere idle curiosity; others there were who stopped to admire the precocious judgment and masterly manœuvres of the little commander.

Shalivahan was rather tall in stature, and of a slender make, with a long neck and arms; his limbs appeared nevertheless to be well proportioned. He was very engaging in his manners, of a brave disposition, and displayed a vigour of body far surpassing all his companions of the same age, and even those of the adjoining states, the young princes included. He sometimes amused himself by gathering together his companions in a certain spot, taking an elevated seat among them, and calling himself their king. He would then appoint his prime minister and the other officials of a court, and set about dispensing justice to his subjects. At this play he settled many knotty points and important debates, to the admiration of many men of years and discretion.

One day, while Shalivahan held his general council with his companions, the ministers and other officials being present, a Josey happened to pass by, whom Shalivahan

boldly and fearlessly addressed. "Well, Josey-bawa," said he, "be so kind as to inform me whether there is any good conquest in store for our court for the present year." The Josey could not help smiling at the youth's mode of expression, and the subject of his address. He replied, "I can tell you what you desire to know, but you must first let me have some *duxina*."* "You may depend on me," replied the child; "I will give it to you, and, what is more, from this day forward you must not go from door to door." At this speech the Josey laughed heartily, and said, "O prince of boys!—an opportunity of achieving a great and splendid victory lies before you, and one which only you are destined to obtain." No sooner did these words fall from the Josey's lips than Shalivahan, much pleased with it, presented him with an earthen pot. The poor Josey accepted the proffered gift without any demur, and took it to his lodgings, where, having placed the pot on the ground, he was agreeably surprised to find it converted into pure gold! This miraculous occurrence convinced him that there was some unusual and important faculty attaching to the boy who had presented him with it,—in short, the Josey believed him to belong to a superior or divine order of beings.

Shalivahan was not over fond of study, nor eager for learning, but he was possessed of so excellent a memory that anything he had once read he could repeat by heart. He could also successfully perform what he had but once before seen done. His grasp of memory and the quickness of his apprehension were among his most remarkable characteristics, and they secured for him the well-merited praise of all who knew him.

In a distant country lived a wealthy merchant called Dhunnanjye, who had three sons, all well educated and great proficients in their business. This merchant was also a man of great tact and experience, but he was so old and

* Money or presents.

infirm that he began to lay aside all thoughts of further gain, and thought it advisable to settle his worldly affairs by apportioning his property to his sons. Being wise and discreet, he made his arrangements in a very judicious manner: he buried, under one of the corner-posts of the cot whereon he slept, a quantity of rice-husks, under the second some clay, under the third a sheet of paper, and under the fourth a quantity of coals. Some time after, as he found his illness was fast gaining upon him, and that he had but a short time to live, he called his three sons to his bed-side, and said to them, "My dear children, I have bequeathed my property to you in equal shares. I have buried all that I die possessed of under the cot which now supports me. The eldest is to receive what I have buried under the two posts at the head of the cot, the next that which is under the right-hand post at the foot, and the youngest that which is under the left-hand post; but I hope you will not, until after my decease, separate yourselves from me, nor have any interest apart from mine. I trust you will always endeavour to acquire a good reputation, and take delight in assisting others. Those who derive their enjoyments from such noble sources, deserve admiration and applause, and will most assuredly secure them." Soon after instructing them in this wise, the old man expired.

The three brothers, having with all due reverence and respect performed the last sad rites for their father, lived together in the greatest harmony and love. Some time after, a slight altercation took place between them, and they each and all determined to share their father's legacy, which was buried under the corner-posts of the cot. With this view they entered the chamber, and dug up the ground, but what was their surprise when, instead of gold, as they had all along expected, they found nothing but what has been already mentioned! "Alas!" said they, "how sanguine were we that our father had in store for us some valuable treasure, such as gold, silver, and precious stones, of which we knew him to be possessed, and here we have

nothing but mere dirt and paper!—for they are but little better." They could not understand the meaning or intention of this act on the part of the aged merchant. "But," said they after awhile, "these articles are certainly common and without value to the eye; we must not, however, treat them as such. Our father, depend upon it, meant something which is at present beyond our comprehension, or he would not have taken such pains to hide these things." They thought and reflected very seriously on the subject, but could arrive at no satisfactory solution of the apparent mystery. They next referred the matter to their friends and relations, but these only laughed at the strange and pitiful legacy which had been left by the merchant to his sons. Nevertheless, all three of them were so fully impressed with the wisdom of their father, and the belief that he could never have been guilty of such a foolish act or tricksy conduct as their remaining relatives imputed to him in no very pleasing terms, that they represented their case to the Pateel* of the district, for his decision. He was equally unable as the rest of them to pass a judgment on the unusual proceeding of the deceased merchant, but he advised the brothers to proceed to the king, and lay their case at the foot of the throne.

The brothers accordingly set out, and having heard of the fame of Vickramadetea, proceeded to his court. On their arrival they represented to the king the object of their journey, and after producing for his inspection the articles which they had dug up, prayed that he would be pleased to solve the mystery for them. The king was much perplexed and astonished at what he heard, and although he gave the case the most mature and deliberate consideration, he could not by any means solve it. He took great pains and evinced much zeal in behalf of the three brothers, as well as for his own satisfaction; he also brought to bear

* The chief officer of the village, applied as a title of courtesy to Marathas or Shoodrus in general.

upon it the united abilities of his councillors, but all to no purpose. At last he informed them, with the utmost concern, that he could not at all explain to them their father's meaning, and advised them to seek elsewhere for the explanation they sought. The brothers had entertained great hopes that King Vickramadetea, whose fame for wisdom and capacity was spread throughout the land, would have set before them a clear exposition of their case, but they were now compelled to go elsewhere, with, as they feared, far less chance of success. Being, however, very desirous to obtain an explanation, they left Oojein, and travelled to another court, where they met with no better success. They next visited the city of Prathestan, and represented their case to King Somekaunt, who patiently heard their representations, but with no less amazement than their other hearers. He also exerted his utmost talent and judgment, combined with that of his councillors, to arrive at a decision, but they also signally failed. Meanwhile, one of the councillors desired the brothers to attend on the morrow, when they would be informed of the result of their application.

A certain potter, who lived in the same neighbourhood with Shalivahan, was in the daily practice of going into the town to sell his wares, after which he usually amused himself by going into court to hear the cases tried before the king. He happened to be present on this occasion, and heard the case of the three brothers. When he returned home he communicated the matter to Shalivahan, and added that the king had not been able to come to a decision, but was much perplexed. Shalivahan laughed heartily when he heard it, and said to the potter, "My good neighbour, I am surprised, not so much at the case as at the want of perception on the part of the king and his officials. It is not a case of such great difficulty as to cause the king to be at a loss to decide it. But perhaps you are only jesting with me: has not the king been always famed for his learning, and deservedly too? Does he not retain in his court the ablest of councillors? All this is against what

you are now pleased to assert." The potter replied, "If, as you say, there is no difficulty in settling the case of the three brothers, and you can do it, I will mention it to the king, who, I am sure, will be glad to hear it." "I do not wish you to mention my name," replied Shalivahan, "but you may, if you please, mention that there is a person who has expressed himself as I have done." So saying, Shalivahan repaired to his usual sport.

Next day the potter went again into the town, but a little earlier than usual, and called at the court to see how the case then pending would terminate. He heard the minister acquainting the brothers that no decision could by any possibility be arrived at, it being one of much difficulty, and shrouded in great mystery. The potter upon this advanced, and thus addressed the king:—"O excellent king!—I beg to state in all humility that there is a youth who has expressed himself ready and able to decide this case; I therefore pray your majesty will send for him. He is wise, and endowed with many good qualities, although he lives outside the town amongst the poor potters. I mentioned to him yesterday the difficulty experienced by the court in deciding this case, and he was very much surprised there should be any difficulty found in it. He is a youth possessing the judgment of riper years, and his excellent carriage and demeanour mark him as an extraordinary and rare being. Though born of humble parents he shows great tact and learning, and will doubtless one day rise to the eminence he is in every way fitted to adorn." The king, hearing this, was greatly pleased, though not a little surprised, as was also his whole court even to a still greater degree. He directed one of his attendants to set off immediately in the direction pointed out by the potter, and to summon to the palace the youth described by him. This was done, but Shalivahan said to the king's attendant, "Go and inform your master that he has no control over me; if, however, he is desirous of seeing me, he is at liberty to come to my dwelling." The attendant returned to the

court and delivered this message to the king, who was greatly amazed at the youth's audacity, and so were all his courtiers. They consulted for awhile, and then despatched a palanquin and some officers, in order to shew him some little attention, with an urgent request for his immediate attendance. On reaching Shalivahan's abode, the officers represented to him that the king was anxious to see him, and begged therefore that he would lose no time in preparing himself to accompany them. "I wonder," said Shalivahan, "why the king should be so desirous of seeing me!—I do not feel disposed to believe all you say. Be good enough, however, to tell him that I can have no business with him,—that is, if he has sent you to me, as you maintain. If there is anything on which he wishes to consult me, let him come here, and I shall be glad to be of service to him." Not being authorised to use compulsion, they returned to court and acquainted the king with what Shalivahan had said. The king could not but admire the daring boldness of the youth, and thought he must be possessed of rare qualifications. At length he directed some of his court furniture to be carried to Shalivahan's dwelling, that he might hold his court there, and then ordered his retinue to be got ready, after which he set out with his officials and the three brothers, accompanied by a large number of the most respectable citizens. Curiosity had no little share in this proceeding on the part of the king: he was naturally desirous of seeing and hearing the knotty point gone into and finally decided. It was therefore without any show of displeasure that the king adjourned his court to Shalivahan's dwelling. Arrived there, the king sent for the young arbitrator, and received him with one of his patronising smiles. Shalivahan drew near to the king, and, after respectfully saluting him, thus addressed him:—"My lord, you need not have put yourself to the trouble of assembling your court here, if, as I suppose, you have come to hear my decision in the case of the three brothers. Why did not your majesty send them to me?—I should have been able, I think, to decide the

case to your majesty's satisfaction, without any of these preparations, as it is a simple one, and does not call for any particular or lengthy discussion." The king smiled at this speech on the part of Shalivahan, who was dressed in the simplest of garbs, without anything even approaching to ornament; his countenance and bearing nevertheless were lofty, and his personal appearance very prepossessing. He was a singular being: in him were combined all the charms of personal beauty and the highest qualities of the mind, so that he was looked upon, notwithstanding his plain garb, by the vast concourse there assembled, with admiring eyes and the deference which is invariably paid to superior and powerful intellect. The king commanded Shalivahan to be seated, and beckoned to one of the brothers to come forward and lay his case before him. The eldest of the merchant's sons accordingly proceeded to relate his story, and produced the husks and clay which had fallen to his share. Shalivahan hereupon said, without hesitation, "The deceased, by leaving you the husks and the clay, meant that all the grain and other produce of the fields, meadows, orchards, gardens, &c. were to fall to your share, as well as the ground and the implements and appliances pertaining to agriculture, which is clearly indicated by the clay. In this there is no mistake, and your brothers cannot lay the slightest claim to any of it." The second brother then presented himself, and, laying before Shalivahan the sheet of white paper, said that that was what had fallen to his share. "This paper," said Shalivahan, "represents the bonds, deeds of mortgage, receipts, books, recoveries, and the interest accruing therefrom, which are all assigned to you, and of which your brothers cannot dispute the possession." The youngest and last son now came forward, and said that his share consisted of a quantity of coals, which he produced, at the same time giving vent to his feelings as follows:—"O thou critical judge and impartial investigator! I know not what fortune my late father intended to leave me, but I cannot help considering myself the unluckiest

of men, for the greater part of the property is already gone to my elder brothers, according to the judgment passed by you, and there is but little left for me." Shalivahan said, "Be patient, and listen to my interpretation. The coals no doubt appear repugnant to the sight, but they will produce far more riches than have fallen to the lot of your brothers. Know, then, that all the ready cash, gold, silver, and jewels, except those ornaments in use in the families of your two brothers, are designed for you, and none can gainsay it."

This interpretation gave much satisfaction to the king and the whole court, as well as to the parties concerned. They admired the great penetration and discernment of Shalivahan, and every spectator present expressed his astonishment and joy at the successful issue of the case. Nor did they fail to heap encomiums on the happy Shalivahan for the talent and ability displayed in his decision. Not one among those assembled there could have hit upon the right signification of the several articles produced by the brothers, nor did it once occur to them to interpret it in the manner Shalivahan had done. It is therefore not to be wondered at that he was looked upon as a youth of very superior ability, of exalted powers of mind, and rare acquirements. The brothers were profuse in their thanks and expressions of gratitude and obligation to him, after which they departed on their return home.

King Somekaunt then asked Shalivahan who he was, to what tribe he belonged, and whether he had always been an inhabitant of that locality. Shalivahan replied by entering into an explanation of his circumstances and antecedents, as well as of the aspersions cast upon his mother and grandfather, touching also on the injustice they had received at his (the king's) hands. All this he delivered in a most sarcastic manner, which touched the king to the quick, as he and all who beheld him were fully persuaded that Shalivahan was one day destined to become great, and that he would rise to eminence by his own unaided efforts.

When the king returned to his court, after the labours of the day, he found a messenger waiting there from King Vickramadetea, to enquire whether any virgin had been delivered of a male child in any part of Somekaunt's dominions. The king informed this messenger, who was an officer of Vickramadetea's household, of the story of the three brothers, and how he had been enabled to decide it by the aid of Shalivahan, together with the circumstances which had attended the birth of the latter, and directed him to lose no time in communicating the whole story to Vickramadetea. The officer returned in haste to his sovereign, and informed him of all these particulars, adding that Shalivahan was then thirteen years old.

King Vickramadetea, on hearing this, was struck to the heart, being fully under the impression that, in accordance with the prediction, his life would shortly be sacrificed by this youth. It occurred to him that perhaps it was so willed by the Supreme Ruler of the universe, as the period of his earthly existence was now, in the usual course of nature, drawing to a close. He despatched a messenger, instantly with a letter to King Somekaunt, requesting that he would send Shalivahan to his court with as little delay as possible, being very desirous of seeing him. The messenger reached his destination in due time, and delivered his master's epistle to King Somekaunt, who stated in reply that he was extremely sorry he could not comply with Vickramadetea's request in this instance, as the youth Shalivahan was of so proud a temper, that when sent for to decide the case of the brothers he refused to come to the court, and that he had been obliged to go to Shalivahan's own dwelling to have the matter settled. He said, however, that he would try, and with that view sent an officer to Shalivahan's house to make known to him King Vickramadetea's wishes regarding him; but he refused to attend the call, notwithstanding the most earnest entreaties. "I see no occasion," said he, "to travel so far. I have nothing to do with King Vickramadetea. I therefore hope you will

carry my reply, and leave me in peace." The officer again tried to prevail on him to accompany the messenger who had been sent for him, but he said, "Why do you thus press me? Have I been guilty of anything against the laws of the country, that you should insist upon my appearance before the king? Go your way,—I refuse to attend." The officer returned to the king, and reported the issue of the meeting, on which Vickramadetea's messenger was despatched immediately to convey the intelligence to his master, who on hearing the tale, felt much grieved and somewhat terrified at the stubborn daring of the youth Shalivahan, which showed at once the nature and temperament of his fated antagonist. He thought also of his intelligence and capacity, his surprising talents, and great personal beauty. "O God!" said Vickramadetea, after he had well weighed all these considerations, "O God! the prediction of the astrologer will most assuredly come to pass! I feel it—I dread it!" In considerable alarm Vickramadetea again despatched an officer, with instructions to use every means he could think of, and, if necessary, to employ stratagem, to bring Shalivahan with him. The officer proceeded with all speed to the residence of Shalivahan, whom he entreated in the most urgent manner to accompany him to the court of Vickramadetea. Shalivahan suspected some foul play from these repeated summonses, and did not hesitate to express his suspicions. "It appears to me," said he, "from your continued entreaties, that there is some deep design at the bottom of your king's apparent condescension and friendliness. He is a famous and wise monarch; and I can think of no other reason why he should bestow such great attention on an humble individual like me. Has he charged me with any crime? What are his reasons for wishing me to appear at his court? I demand this explanation before I set out with you, if I am to do so at all." "I cannot tell," replied the officer; "my instructions do not extend so far." "Return then to your king," said Shalivahan, "and tell him not to expose him-

self to the ridicule of his subjects and of other monarchs by this unmeaning and unwise conduct." The officer retired, and when he approached the monarch, his dejected look, even more than the absence of Shalivahan, revealed to him the ill success of the mission. The king eagerly questioned the officer, who repeated, without the omission of a single word, all that Shalivahan had said. This so enraged Vickramadetea that he ordered a body of his best troops to prepare for a march to Prathestan, for the purpose of punishing the braggart.

When all was in readiness, Vickramadetea sallied forth, seated in a splendid chariot. As he drew near to the city, Shalivahan, knowing well that the army had been brought there solely on his account, and hearing the sounds of martial music, such as trumpets, drums, &c. was overcome by fear, and eagerly running into the presence of his mother, addressed her thus:—"O mother!—a great body of troops is approaching,—I think those of King Vickramadetea. I pray you, kill me on the spot!—I am the cause of it. Or can you adopt any expedient to assist me?" The mother replied, "Shalivahan, take courage, but at the same time be cautious. I was aware that king Vickramadetea meditated this outrage on us, because you did not proceed to his court, but I am prepared for it." Saying this she rose from her seat, and having bathed and otherwise prepared herself, invoked the protection of the divine Shashe, who had promised her his help in time of need. No sooner had she finished her invocation, and recalled his form, which she had seen on the bank of the river, than he appeared, and asked her what she required of him. "My lord!—my beloved protector!" cried she, "you are well aware of the cause of my invocation to you. It is that you may preserve us from the danger which now threatens us. King Vickramadetea and his forces are advancing, doubtless to massacre us in cold blood, for the apparent slight offered to him by Shalivahan." "Fear not, Soometra," said the Shashe, "your son will not only conquer

Vickramadetea's army, but will also slay the king himself; of this you may rest assured." On hearing this, Soometra desired Shalivahan to prostrate himself at his father's feet, and ask his blessing. He accordingly did so, after which the Shashe presented him with a phial of nectar of a peculiar description, and told him to sprinkle it over the earthen army which he had hitherto used as playthings, when they would not only be immediately endowed with life and vigour, and be fit to contend with the approaching invaders, but would undoubtedly prove victorious. Saying this, and leaving the precious phial in the hands of the wondering youth, the Shashe disappeared.

Shalivahan now lost no time, but hastened to the place where his toys were concealed, and sprinkled them with the nectar, when—wonderful to relate!—they became at once animated, and flocked round him, anxious to be led to the combat. He formed them in battle array in the open fields, when they instantly attained the stature of full-grown men, and the animals became the size of life. They presented a formidable appearance, such as the mightiest and the richest of monarchs might have been proud of; and no language can express the joy of the favoured Shalivahan at this unexpected and wonderful transformation. He hastened his arrangements to meet the advancing foe, placing the cavalry so as to support the infantry, and making every other disposition for battle, having become a complete adept in such manœvering by his daily practice. He then led them on in person against the forces of Vickramadetea, who was in a manner completely thrown out in his calculations, for where he had expected to meet with no opposition, he found himself face to face with an army equal, if not superior to his own. The impetuous Shalivahan dashed on with incredible fury, and before Vickramadetea could put his troops in a position of defence, had broken into their ranks, with such effect that men, horses, and elephants were thrown into one confused mass, and the battle became a fearful hand-to-hand fight. Among the foremost might

have been seen Shalivahan, dealing death-blows at every stroke. He soon cut his way through a body of men, and advanced towards the king, with whom he meditated single combat, in order thus to put an end to the dreadful massacre his followers were committing on the army opposed to them. The king, perceiving Shalivahan coming towards him, and observing the masterly manner in which he wielded the powerful weapon of destruction he carried, felt greatly daunted, and thought that perhaps in his blindness he had shortened his own life by entering the field against the antagonist who, according to the prediction, was destined to cause his death. While he was yet pondering on these melancholy forebodings, the crowd of men, surging like the sea, had borne Shalivahan away to a remote part of the field, where he continued to display great prowess and valour. Vickramadetea used every means in his power, which his tact and ability could suggest, to save his men, but to no purpose. His principal officers and most experienced commanders also vainly strove to retrieve the day, and to cope advantageously with the bravery of their opponents.

The battle raged for seven days successively, during which, except the time allowed for the rest and relaxation of the contending forces, Shalivahan would not consent to any truce. Vickramadetea's troops were by this time very materially reduced in number, and Shalivahan once more sought out their chief, who, to his credit be it said, did not shrink from the encounter. His men were literally cut up by thousands, and he was resolved to decide the contest by single combat. The two leaders accordingly engaged in deadly strife, and continued long and fiercely contending for the victory. At length Vickramadetea felt his strength fast failing him, occasioned by loss of blood from his numerous wounds, and utter physical exhaustion; he therefore attempted to fly from his opponent. This was a signal for his troops to follow the example: they crossed the river Nerbudda, pursued by Shalivahan and his forces, and many

lives were sacrificed in the pursuit. Shalivahan kept Vickramadetea in view, and finding at last that he had approached him sufficiently near, he let fly an arrow, which pierced Vickramadetea's heart and for ever stopped his breath. After this he resolved to return, and with that view collected his forces and attempted to recross the river, but no sooner did the troops enter the water than they at once dissolved, and a voice issued from the clouds, exclaiming, "Victory! victory! O Shalivahan, be satisfied with the prodigy you have this day been enabled to perform. Henceforth a new era commences, named after yourself, and you will reign supreme in the southern and western provinces beyond the Nerbudda, but the northern parts will still appertain to the heir of Vickramadetea, and be governed by his descendants."

Shalivahan, after hearing this prediction, returned to his house, but with a sinking heart and dejected looks, caused no doubt by the loneliness of his situation, as there was not even a charger left for him to mount, all the temporary aid he had received having been suddenly withdrawn. When he reached his dwelling his mother Soometra met him with great joy, and loaded him with caresses, praising him for the prowess he had that day displayed, as did also his grandfather Soolochun. They once more reverted to their former mode of living, until at length, in progress of time, Shalivahan was proclaimed king, according to the prediction he had heard while recrossing the river Nerbudda after killing Vickramadetea as above related. He was now placed in a position suited to his high talent, and in which he could give free scope to the powers of his mind and to his matured ideas of justice and equity. He reigned long, enjoyed unusual reputation, and at length was gathered to his fathers full of years and honour.

At Oojein, the death of Vickramadetea caused, as may be supposed, much regret and sincere sorrow in the breasts of his loving and devoted subjects, and they mourned for him as for a father. After the usual period

allowed on such melancholy occasions, Bhutty, the minister, with the consent and approval of the whole nation, enthroned Vickramadetea's son, in the hope that he would perpetuate the fame, virtue, and amiable qualities of his father, in which they were not disappointed.

THE END.

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THE translator feels called upon to thank his subscribers and friends thus publicly for the very kind indulgence and forbearance he has experienced at their hands. His apologies are due to them for the delay that has occurred in the issue of this work, owing in some measure to personal indisposition, but mainly to his intended arrangements not having been completed in time. He trusts that the explanation now given will satisfy all, and that they will in addition kindly overlook any error that may have been inadvertently committed, either in the work itself or in the designation of their names in the accompanying alphabetical list.

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